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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

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OLD FOR-EVER.

BY ALFRED OLLIVANT.

I.

THE Olivers were an outstanding couple, even in that outstanding body of men and women who form the thin but efficient bulwark against the lean wolf-men roaming the hills in packs from the Malakand to Dera Ghazi Khan, and looking down with covetous eyes from their barren fastnesses on the plains, shining with water, rich in beeves, yellow with corn, and teeming with loot and women. Over those sleek river-laced lands successive waves of wolf-men have surged out of the ravenous North, century after century, from the passes which gave the Sikhs the cholera in the days of Ranjeet Singh, harrying, ravishing, and leaving their scars to the walls of that Delhi which is a far cry, as all Hind from Cape Comorin to Lundi Kotal can tell you.

When for the first time in history a counter-wave swept northwards from the capital of the Moguls over the prostrate Punjab to the foot of the astounded hills, that wave was crested by white men, who established themselves forthwith like a wire fence, barbed too, between the tribesmen and their prey. *Our side the fence law, order, and security*, said the audacious Feringhis; *your side, go as you please.* And the white race succeeded under conditions which had baffled the Lion of the Punjab himself, and amid men who had scoffed at the Sikh Raj. Of the many great Frontiersmen of that first wave, in the days between the overthrow of the Khalsa Army and the Mutiny, the greatest alike in stature and personality was the black-bearded giant, John Nicholson.

As a merry stripling Tom Oliver had ridden the Frontier from Bannu to Peshawar with the famous Deputy Commissioner in the days when the feeling between the officers of John Company and Queen's Service men ran to duelling point. He had accompanied his chief on his ride from Kohat through the murky pass to Peshawar at the time the mysterious lotus-flower was being passed in secrecy and silence from native regiment to native regiment, and had acted as Nicholson's A.D.C. when he succeeded Neville Chamberlain in the command of the Moveable Column that marched on Delhi after saving the Punjab.

Young Oliver had been beside his chief in the narrow lane by the Kabul Gate when, after the death of the gallant Jacob, the 1st Bengal Fusiliers wavered under a terrific fire from the roof-tops, and Nicholson sprang forward to rally them to a fresh assault on the Burn bastion. At the moment his leader fell mortally wounded, young Oliver fell too at his side.

"Where's Lad?" was the constant question of the great soldier during his nine days' death agony on the Ridge. And "Where's Lad?" were among the last words he muttered, blue-lipped and faintly frothing, when at last death brought relief to one of the noblest of Englishmen.

To his chief Tom Oliver had always been Lad; and to the Frontier, Lad he remained long after the last gleam of boyishness had vanished, and he had become the sombre soldier of Frontier legend, a man of a temper apt to keep the border marches and cope with the iron inhabitants of those iron hills. It was not till twenty years after the death of his first leader that his nickname changed.

The dun mountains that lie across the gate of the North like some old lion, showing his bones as he dies of starvation, but majestic and terrible still, are for all their air of deadness always aflicker and not seldom ablaze. Those blazes are sudden as explosions. A hush, a long-time smouldering, perhaps a faint eddy of smoke upon a ridge, then a sudden spurt of flame stabs the darkness like a dagger, and four hundred miles of Frontier is alight. Forthwith ensues a molten eruption. Down a hundred gaunt hillsides turbulent lashkars of shaven-headed swordsmen come tumbling like lava under huge green banners, and inspired by Allah-intoxicated mullahs.

The origin of these eruptions is nearly always the same, as any political who has been agent in one of the passes and knows his job will tell you. The mullahs get at the women in the name of God, as the mullahs of most lands are wont to do. Thereafter the women approach their men daintily and with mocking smiles.

"You are not men," they say. "You are children. We will play with you no more till

you have proved yourselves. Come back to us after a goodly slaughter of the infidels, and you will see what you will see. That is the will of Allah, which cannot be gainsaid."

The thwarted tribesmen then rush to impale themselves upon British bayonets, inspired by the hope of a houris-peopled Paradise if they die, and of dutiful and docile wives if they live to return to the home-tower in their native valleys.

In the late 'seventies, when trouble was brewing all along the Afghan border, one such eruption thus fomented found Lad Oliver, now a Major in Pank's Punjabis, cut off at the wrong end, which is to say the Afghan end, of a sixty-mile pass. A runner slipped through with the news, and the roar of volley-firing booming down the long defile told its own tale to the detachment at the right, which is to say the British end, of the pass. Those were the days when the heliograph had just come into use in the British Army. The officer in charge at the base signalled back to Kohat, the headquarters of the Punjab Frontier Force, that a company of his regiment had been isolated at Ali Kheyl, and was being swamped by Afghan regulars aided by tribesmen under the Commander-in-Chief in Khost, that merry fellow Faiz Mahomed Khan.

"Which company?" came the query from H.Q. "And who commands them?"

"The Jat company; Major Oliver."

"Get in touch with him by helio."

"We have tried and failed. No sun his end of the pass apparently."

Later in the day, however, communication between the two posts was established for a moment between clouds.

"How long can you hold on?" asked the man at the base.

Back flashed the laconic reply—

"For ever."

II.

Thenceforward to the men of Chillianwallah and Sobraon and the Ridge, Tom Oliver might still be Young Lad; to the rising generation he was Old For-ever.

The new name stuck, for it expressed the man. There was about it a hint of Cromwell and his Ironsides chaunting as the mists rose before the crowning mercy of Dunbar, "The Lord of Hosts my shepherd is," which rightly suggested the core of Puritan steel that was the fundamental characteristic of a soldier, simply religious after the manner of the older Mutiny men — Herbert Edwardes, Havelock, the Lawrences.

Those who did not know Old For-ever well attributed this hardness in him to incorrect

causes. They said he was an Ishmael, and had gone the ordinary way of the disappointed man. It was not so. True, promotion had come but slowly to him for all his service; but he was not ambitious, and therefore had not reaped the first-fruits of ambition—bitterness. His silent and somewhat lonely habit of life were due rather to a temperament austere and almost monkish. Moreover, Old For-ever's few intimates were aware that he had refused times without number both Staff appointments and positions as a political, pressed upon him too, which would have put within his grasp the Chief Commissionership of the Frontier Provinces. He preferred, however, to command the Jat company of Pank's Punjabis.

"I am a soldier," he always said. "And a regimental soldier."

In his own regiment it was maintained that no man knew Old For-ever who had not seen him in action with his Jats. Then the stern and solitary soldier of the Piffer Mess, who was never addressed in the way of chaff by his juniors, and rarely by his equals, unbent. He became genial first, and later radiant. By the time his penny whistle emerged from his pocket he was a boy jesting with his peers, a father merry amid his children.

"The Happy Warrior," young Apple Pippin, his subaltern, called him after the affair of Ali Kheyl.

At this time his face seen in profile, and inscribed by Cherry Wright for all to see amid less desirable works of art on the walls of the fort at Jumrood, was rocky as the Shutargardan: the nose with its bony promontory very pronounced, the long chin curling upwards, the hair just beginning to retreat from a forehead that sloped a thought too much. He never tanned; colourless always as his hero John Nicholson. His eyes were blue, but not the fierce and vivid Saxon blue of that other great Frontiersman, Hodson of Hodson's Horse; rather a clouded lavender that in certain moods took on the hue of smoked steel. Women remarked, not without surprise, that the note of them was not hardness but wistfulness. His dark hair, too, did not turn white as did that of other men, beginning at the temples and spreading outwards; but there descended upon it a fine mist of grey, in some lights almost invisible, in others like dew upon a lawn.

"There is music in that man and mysticism," said a great lady who saw him at Murree, and was fascinated by his face and piqued by his avoidance of her.

"There *is* music of a simple kind," her host admitted grimly. "But we don't speak of it as music in the Force. We call it pip-squeak — Oliver's pip-squeak."

Old For-ever's penny whistle had, indeed, long been a standing joke in the Piffers. It was

not a penny whistle really, much less was it a flute. It was a crude instrument, something between the two, that Oliver had picked up in a remote Waziri village near the Tochi, on one of those mysterious expeditions of his when he disappeared for weeks at a time into the hills with a Pathan orderly and a shot-gun. Once possessed of his toy he was never parted from it, and spent his happiest hours piping to himself, with gaps and gasps, familiar little tunes. In moments of stress it emerged, as it were, spontaneously from his pocket. During the affair of the fort, for instance, at the critical moment the thin strains of "Pop goes the weasel" brought renewed strength to the hearts of his fainting Jats.

"Then the Major Sahib took out his pipe and made prayer to his God to come and help the brethren—even so!" the Jemadar of the Jat company told Maharaj Singh, describing the fight.

The Subadar-Major nodded his magnificent head.

"It is always so with the Major Sahib when the battle waxes," he said. "The Major Sahib calls upon his pipe—even so!—to the God of the Sahib-log. And the God comes without fail." Priding himself upon his religious knowledge, the old Sikh added for the further enlightment of his junior, "This God is one Lat Yusuf, but I have not heard that he is brother to the Burra Lat at Calcutta—Lat Crike Yusuf, who wrought miracles near Mecca in my father's time. Our gurus at Amritsar have told me of him."

"He is a fine God to fight," remarked the Jemadar, not without awe. "Did I not behold him at Ali Kheyl? I speak, Subadar Major Sahib, as a small and foolish child."

"Yea, verily, Jemadar Sahib. He deals strong blows in the battle when the Major Sahib calls upon him," the Subadar-Major admitted and departed, nodding majestically.

When he was a little over forty, Tom Oliver married a woman like unto himself, who seemed to have absorbed the quality of the hills amid which she lived. People were surprised; but the most critical admitted that if Old For-ever must marry at all, the only possible mate for him was the one he had chosen. The pair were curiously alike physically. Marion was tall, athletic, taciturn, and at a pinch had taken her husband's place upon parade at the head of his Jats without detection, so the story went. She looked her formidable best on horseback. From under the battered solar topee which she wore with a chin-strap, eyes that were the hue of smoked steel in certain moods and certain lights looked out and held you with the steady grip of a man's. You saw a firm long mouth, the lips slightly compressed, a strong chin, and a long bony face that was healthy for all its pallor. Her voice, too, like

her husband's penny whistle, popping out always in unexpected places, surprised you, so deep and rich it was as it issued voluminously from her lean chest.

There was music in it too, of a rare quality, echoing.

People called her plain; no man certainly, and few women, ever spoke of her as ugly. "Une belle laide, perhaps," said the kind old Colonel of the regiment. When she married she was fifteen years her husband's junior, though few would have suspected it. Marion Granet was not a girl—and never had been; she was not a woman—and never would be; that was the general opinion. Throughout the Frontier Force she was known always as the Highlander, nobody quite knew why, seeing that she was English to the bone, of a good Yorkshire family. But the name was accepted, as such names are, because it fitted.

"Her father was a Granet, her mother a Block of Concrete," said the flippant jokers of the Force. The couple, indeed, had the reputation of being somewhat inhuman in their attitude towards each other and towards the world. But nothing really was known of them in the Piffers, and not a great deal even in the regiment. They entertained little, living very quietly in a pleasant bungalow amid the apricot orchards of Kohat, with a little stream running at the foot of the garden. It was known to all, however, that they lived for the regiment, and especially for the Jat company.

If ever there had been a doubt as to whether she was the right wife for Old For-ever, Marion settled it when, as a bride, she killed her man, and that man, too, the Mullah Perwindah of Parachinar and evil notoriety. That happened after the reprisals on Thal at the mouth of the Kuram, which Old For-ever was told off to carry out with his Jats. The mullah sent down five picked ghazis from Hazir Pir with orders to bag "the Kaffir who trots like a camel," dead or alive. But the Pathan company of Pank's Punjabis were up to the wiles of their cousins the Turis, and bagged the ghazis instead. That delighted the Pathan company, who for long thereafter threw it up in the teeth of the Jats, to whom it was recognised the Major Sahib belonged.

"These murderers were thy people," said the teased and surly Jats. "How should we know the way to deal with them? In *our* country we know nothing of such fellows."

The Pathans grinned and polished their teeth as they squatted on their hunkers.

"Well for the izzat of thy company that we were there to protect thine officer. Else had it gone ill with him, O cows of the fat Punjab, who chew the cud and draw the plough and greatly sleep, and have neither eyes to see nor ears to hear nor nostrils to

smell when Death like a striped tiger stalks thy sahib."

"In *our* country we have no murderers," muttered the peasant soldiers of the plains doggedly. "We know not their ways. For we are not jackals who live in caves and sharpen their teeth on rocks on the bare hillside where no corn can grow because God's curse is on it."

The simple fellows were anxious about their Sahib, and not without cause. For it was known all along the Frontier from Dera Ismail Khan to Fort Mackeson that after his first failure the Mullah Perwindah, a stubborn old man and no coward, had sworn a great oath that his home and his tower should see him no more till he or the Kaffir who trotted like a camel had quitted the world; and had forthwith come down the pass from Parachinar to see what he could do himself for God and His Prophet. What he did, in fact, was to lie up in the culvert under the road that led from Old Forever's bungalow to the lines; and there lay up with him a tulwar with a blade like a hawk's beak and his trusted jhezail.

That was how he caught little Apple Pippin and Cherry Wright coming away from the Olivers' bungalow that Sunday evening, full of chaff, both lads unarmed, though well they knew the old Frontier saying, "Once beyond the Indus always carry a revolver after dusk." The Highlander heard the first shot, and guessed at once who it was meant for, for she knew full well the story of the mullah's oath. Also she heard just then, to her intense relief, her Tom pip-squeaking on his pipe, "Onward, Christian so-o-old-dears," as was his custom on Sunday evening, and was glad. She snatched his Martini-Henry from the hat-stand, and stalked with long strides down to the road, loading and clicking the breech-block home as she went.

When she reached the road the mullah had already finished little Apple Pippin, who lay face down across the way in the new grey dittoes of which he was so delightfully self-conscious, and was finishing the other lad with his tulwar. Marion was a good, but by no means great, rifle-shot; and in the scrimmage that was going on between the English lad armed with his bare fists and the steel-shod fanatic, few but her husband would have risked a shot. She ran with long strides down the road towards the tumult. The mullah heard the soft pad of her approach, and cut his victim down with the scream of some giant bird of prey. Then he turned to meet the new danger. What he saw staggered him. A woman was coming at him! He hesitated—and was lost.

Marion was standing in the middle of the road, loading again, with wary eyes on the three men strewn in the dust fifty yards in front, when her husband came leaping towards her with a naked sword in his hand, and naked swords in his

eyes, and his terriers tearing at his heels.

"Don't go up to him, Tom," she called, never turning. "I'm not sure he's dead."

Old For-ever had considerably more experience in such matters than his bride.

He glanced at her face. She was steady as an iceberg heaving faintly in the long Atlantic swell, and much the colour of one. He touched her hand as he shot past.

"He's not dead, my dear," he said. "But he's done. You blotted him plumb through the chest."

He bent over the three men sprawling alongside each other in the road: the fair English lads in their neat Sunday suits from Jermyn Street splashed and shining with blood, and the old swordsman in his dingy white robes gasping out his life and clutching at his chest.

"He's scuppered the two boys," said Old For-ever, very white and quiet to his wife who had followed him. "There's not the ghost of a flicker in either of them." His anger was awful, so still it was and white. It made Marion tremble. She thought the wrath of God must be like that.

Then up galloped Jigger Jackson, the doctor of the 10th Marathas, a little spluttering black-moustached Eurasian, who flung himself off his pony.

"Pork-butcher of Cawnpur!" he shouted in his broken Pushtu in the ear of the passing mullah. "Hearken! Thy body shall be sewn in the hide of a well-fatted sow and shall be preserved thus in spirits of alcohol in the museum at Peshawar, that any unbeliever from the bazaar may behold thy shame and make mock of thee for ever."

"The man's dying," said Marion briefly.

"I don't care if he is!" retorted Jigger valiantly.

"You ought to," snapped Old For-ever. "Shut up. We're English—some of us."

The dying ghazi's eyes wandered from face to face. Whether he understood what was passing or only guessed the import it is hard to say. He raised his hand to his forehead in some kind of surly acknowledgment.

"O Kaffir who trots like a camel, thou art a Sahib even as is said among my people," he muttered. "But *thou*, Black Face and Bainshut, art the son of a pariah bitch by a jackal that died of the foaming madness! *Thou* canst not harm me." He closed his eyes. "My place in Paradise is sure as is thine own in Jehannum. I have slain two infidels, and would that I had slain a third! I have done well."

That unloosed the tongue of Old For-ever. He bent over the dying fanatic.

"Well hast thou done indeed!" he cried. "It is like a true Turi and swordsman of the Prophet to slay two children and attempt the slaughter of a woman and then make boast of it! Hearken, O mullah! For twenty years have I known

the men of the tribes from the Suleiman Hills to Abbotabad, and have dwelt among them—Waziris, Ghilzais, Jowaki Afridis, Hazaras, Swatis, Mohmunds. They have feasted at my house, and I in their towers. We have been brothers of blood one day and enemies to the death the next. I have loved them and I have fought them. But always, whether friend or foe, I have respected them because they were men and warriors. And never till now have I known even a treacherous Mahsud set out to the slaughter of women and children?"

The dying ghazi wiped the froth from his lips.

"As to the lads thou liest, according as is the custom of thy race," he answered calmly. "These were not babes. They were man-grown, officer-sahibs in the service of the Woman across the Black Water. Were they not with thee at Thal that day? Did I not see them with mine own eyes at the burning of the homes of my people, and making sport like young bulls at the ravishing of our women?"

"Son of the Mother of Lies," said Old For-ever sternly, "thou wast not in Thal that day. Well I knew where thou wert. Thou wast in thy tower hiding behind the skirts of thy women, lest the rod of chastisement fall on thy back too."

The trans-frontier man paid no heed. He hitched himself upon his elbow and peered with glazing eyes at Marion.

"In the matter of the mem-sahib," he said, "I swear to thee by the Kaaba that when my eye fell upon her as she came down the road, running even as thou runnest, O accursed, with long strides like a trotting camel, I thought it was thyself disguised as a woman to escape the wrath of God and His servant."

He fell back in the road, salaaming feebly to the white woman standing like a pillar at his feet.

Old For-ever bent over him.

"I believe thee, O mullah," he said in the ear of the dying fanatic.

III.

The affair of the Mullah Perwindah was the beginning of a more serious and a bloodier business. The troubles with Sher Ali, the Amir of Afghanistan, long brewing, boiled over. General Roberts went up the Kuram through Thal with a column to deal with it, and Pank's Punjabis went with him.

On the night march to surprise the Spingawi Kotal at the head of the pass, where speed and secrecy were the essence of the operation, things did not go well. The pace was too slow, and there was straggling. Bobs rode up himself to the head of the column to find out what was amiss. The place of honour was held by a Punjabi regiment, accorded

that distinction by reason of its record, which equalled and, so it maintained, even surpassed that of Pank's. The Pathan companies were leading, and the Pathans were neighbours of and akin to the tribesmen about to be attacked. Bobs scented danger and summoned the Colonel, in whose ear as he went to the call a Sikh orderly whispered that there was treachery amid the Pathans. Just then a sepoy let off his rifle. The Jemadar did not fall the culprit out. Instantly Bobs halted the column and sent the 72nd Highlanders and Pank's Punjabis to take the lead.

The column got on the move again and swung briskly on its way. Towards dawn, as they neared their destination, Bobs turned to his A.D.C.

"Go and see what's leading now," he said.

"Pank's Punjabis, sir," the answer came back.

"The Pathan company?"

"No, sir; Major Oliver and his Jats."

"Good," said the little man on the big waler. He drew up at the side of the road, struck a match, and looked at his watch. "We shall do it," he said. "Go and tell Oliver directly he reaches the foot of the Kotal to front-form company and charge without waiting further orders."

Old For-ever did, and took the position.

At the storming of the Peiwar Kotal, and indeed throughout the campaign, Pank's Punjabis again did well.

A year after, when Bobs led them into Afghanistan with the Kabul Field Force to avenge the murder of Cavagnari, the British Envoy, and the massacre of the British Mission, they did better. Old For-ever was now second-in-command.

In October the force occupied the Amir's capital. In the majestic Bala Hissar, arsenal and citadel, the scene of the last stand of Hamilton and his Guides, pockmarked still with the bullets of that great fight and splashed with blood, the British General, in the presence of the chief Sirdars, addressed the assembled multitude from the steps of the Hall of Audience and proclaimed its punishment to the guilty city.

A few days later the force moved out into Sherpur, outside the native city, the new cantonments prepared by the late Amir for his army.

Early in the winter telegraphic communication was fitfully established with India; but heliographs between Lundi Kotal at the head of the Khyber and the Afghan capital supplied a surer avenue of news. They winked all day. Old For-ever, whenever he had a moment to spare, might be found standing on the flat roof of his quarters with folded arms, his face to the east and back to Kabul, watching those flashes. He was waiting news and anxious: everybody in the Force knew why. Then one afternoon one of Bobs' Gurkha orderlies came into the lines of the Punjabis. Forth-

with the Colonel himself went over to the quarters of his second-in-command.

"Bobs wants to see you, Lad," he said kindly.

"Now, sir?"

"I believe so."

Old For-ever went with set face. He had not liked the look in the Colonel's eyes. There was compassion in them.

"What's the trouble?" he said to the little Gurkha trotting at his side. "Mahomed Jan on the move?"

"I know not, Sahib. I think the mem-sahib."

When Old For-ever entered the General's room the other officers present disappeared. The little man in the Balaclava whiskers and the big riding-boots rose gravely to greet the friend of twenty years.

"Well, Lad, old lad," he said affectionately.

"What is it, sir?" asked Old For-ever almost abruptly.

There was a moment's pause.

"How was your wife when last you heard?"

"Well, sir—considering."

Bobs looked out of the window.

"I haven't very good news, Lad," he said quietly. "Among the reports that came through this afternoon, quite unofficially, was this." He handed the other a slip of paper on which he had written in his own hand the following message: *Reported from Kohat that Mrs Oliver has died in childbed.*

Old For-ever glanced at it. "Do you know who the sender is?" he asked.

"Yes; Bartlett of the Khyber column."

"Bart's reliable," said Old For-ever gloomily.

"Usually," Bobs answered. "And I had the message repeated. But he reports it as a rumour only. It may not be confirmed."

The other shook his head.

"It's true," he said. "I've killed my darling." And he went out.

And that was the first sure intimation anybody had that there was something on earth Old For-ever loved better than his regiment and his Jats.

IV.

After that Old For-ever went out into the darkness alone. And when he did that it was terrible, as the older men in the Force well knew. In the course of his service he had done it three times: once on the Ridge when they told him, sorely stricken himself, that he would never see John Nicholson again; once when a Pathan native officer, in whom he had trusted implicitly, sold him for a song in the Jowaki country; and once (unknown this to all but one) when Marion Granet first refused him.

The symbol of his going out into the darkness alone of late years was well known to his

brother officers. He stuffed his whistle away in his pocket, and the familiar pip-squeak was heard no more in the lines of the Punjabis. That was the outward and visible sign of the dying that was taking place within.

"What poor old Lad wants to set him up is a touch of the real thing," said his Colonel, "a ruddy, old, rousing, red-hot fight."

And in the mess of the native officers the Subadar-Major, grand old Maharaj Singh, said the same thing with equal confidence.

"The Major Sahib will emerge into the light like the sun from behind clouds when the battle is joined."

And it looked as if the cure might be forthcoming any day, for those were perilous times. Sherpur was a partially beleaguered city. There were daily forays, excursions, and alarms; and behind them all the shadow and the memory of that first fatal occupation of Kabul by a British Army under Keane and Cotton forty years before.

The Afghans, too, had not forgotten their success of those days against the same invaders. The aged Mullah Mushk-i-Allam preached an impassioned Jehad throughout Kohistan, and the ladies of the deposed Yakub Khan lent powerful aid.

Early in December the Afghan Army took the field to do to the Feringhis what their fathers had done to Elphinstone's column in the Khurd-Kabul pass in '42. Mahomet Jan advanced from Ghazni on the capital with an army reported to be like the sea in multitude.

Bobs sent out three columns to meet him, Baker and Macpherson with the infantry to the north, and a cavalry column under Massey along the Ghazni road. The hoped-for junction between the infantry and cavalry was not effected, and Mahomet Jan fell like an avalanche on the little cavalry force. When Bobs galloped up to the sound of the firing, he found four Horse Artillery guns of Smith-Wyndham's battery and three hundred sabres, British and Indian, opposed to some ten thousand Afghan regulars and wild Ghilzais coming over the plain like a tidal wave.

Bobs took in the situation in a glance. If Mahomet Jan's advancing swordsmen could be held up till Macpherson's belated infantry came up from behind the heights across the Chardeh Valley the little column would be saved, and Kabul with it. If not, both were lost. Infantry were the dire need of the moment—infantry.

He sent back Hills at the gallop to Hugh Gough with orders to despatch infantry at full speed to cover the Deh-i-Mazang defile through which the broken column must retreat. Five minutes after Hills galloped into Sherpur the Jat company of Pank's Punjabis were issuing from Highlanders' Gate at the double, led by Old For-ever at his camel trot. It

was two miles to the mouth of the defile through the Asmai heights and another half-mile through the gorge. From the moment Hills galloped into Sherpur to the moment Old For-ever at the head of his double company debouched from the defile on to the plain where the losing battle was being fought, was little more than half an hour.

Bobs came galloping up through the dust.

"Who are you?" he called in his high-pitched voice.

"Pank's Punjabis, sir," answered Old For-ever.

The little man peered through the dust.

"Is that Lad Oliver?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where *do* you spring from?"

"Sherpur, sir."

"You've come on wings, then," said Bobs. "And well for us. We've lost two guns. You must cover the retreat of the column and then retire on Sherpur."

He pointed to a confusion of men and horses straggling through the dust towards the mouth of the defile.

"That's your job," he said. "Cover that."

"Very good, sir," answered Old For-ever, and turned to his panting men. "Chal, baba!" he called—"Come on, babies!"—and advanced to meet the tumult.

It was not quite a rout, but it was mighty near one: his experienced eye told him that straightway. About the retiring troopers were all the signs of men with their tails down but not demoralised—as yet.

"Steady, my sons!" he called in his strong voice, as he strode through them. "You've plenty of time. Give my fellows a chance to get through."

"God bless you, sorr!" shouted a wounded Irish cavalry man.

"God help you!" muttered an English ditto.

Lancers, Bengal and British, trailed by on beaten horses, the points of their lowered pennants bloody. Troopers who had been dismounted in the fray tramped doggedly along in their heavy boots with the awkward duckling gait of dismounted cavalry, some tripping over their long swords, some still carrying their lances over their shoulders. Two artillery teams without their guns, wounded men on the lead horses, wounded men on the limbers, jogged hopelessly along. At the tail of the column a solitary Horse Artillery gun, unescorted, was firing case at the white-clad tribesmen advancing in waves with flashing tulwars under glorious green banners.

"It's a wonderful sight," said Old For-ever with a gleam of quiet enthusiasm as his company cleared the column, "*wonderful.*"

Just then there was a fierce and strenuous commotion in the detachment about the barking gun that was now the only thing between the Punjabis and the enemy, an isolated stubborn

islet waiting apparently to be inundated by the advancing tide. The gun rear-limbered up and came through the Jats at a heavy trot.

"That's my last packet of sweets," said the subaltern, gaunt-eyed but game as he passed. "I can't do anything more but spit at 'em. Good luck. And I wish you joy of your job."

He was gone into the dusty confusion from which Pank's Punjabis, that regiment of many races, was emerging, all in khaki, with swarthy faces and gleaming eyes, the Colonel on his bony waler towering above his marching men. Company by company the regiment extended and stretched athwart the line of Mahomet Jan's advance.

The old Colonel was killed in the hour of his pride just as the movement was completed, and the regiment lay across the Ghazni road with their backs to the defile and their left on the Kabul river. Then Old For-ever took command. The glow that had lighted him as he led his company through Highlanders' Gate was now ablaze. He was happy.

The men saw it, especially his Jats. They nudged each other, while the Gurkhas grinned and the Sikhs licked their lips.

"The Major Sahib smiles."

"Verily he loves the battle."

"Our father is happy once again."

"He has come forth from behind the clouds like the sun after rain, even as said the Subadar-Major Sahib."

Then there was a chuckle all along the line. The Major had taken out his old briar-pipe.

"Now he lights his little hookah."

"That has lain in the shadow of his pocket since the darkness descended on him."

"Hark ye, my brothers! In a short time if these fellows come on, the little whistle that cries like a baby will appear. It is I, Sher Afzul from Yuzufzai, who say it."

The appearance of the infantry and their steadiness had given pause to Mahomet Jan's army. They shouted insults across the way, brandished their long knives, shook their banners, but hung in their advance.

"They think we're the head of a brigade," said Old For-ever to the Adjutant. "They'll know we aren't when we begin to retire."

He waited till the dust in the defile told him that the cavalry and the guns were well away. Then he began his retreat.

V.

At the crisis of the Mutiny, when men were raising irregular corps out of the dust of the earth, and arming anything loyal that had ever handled a broom, it was young Lad Oliver

who first discovered the fighting capacity of the Jats, those simple Bœotians of the great peninsula, beloved of all, the butt of all, workers by nature, tillers of the soil, husbandmen by instinct and tradition, and warriors only when Necessity drives or Love calls.

They have not perhaps quite the panther-like *élan* of the lithe Sikhs, nor the bull-pup joy in battle of the little Gurkhas. Old For-ever always said himself that the fighting of his Jats reminded him of that of an English county regiment. It was more solid than showy, and none the less terrible for that.

"My fellows are what I call very *satisfactory* fighters," he once remarked in a rare moment of expansion.

It was perhaps because he had discovered them in his youth that he loved them so in his middle age. Certainly it was because he loved them so —and well they knew it—that their fighting under him had long been a legend on the Frontier.

Now, just before he gave the order to retire, Old For-ever stalked along the line of the Jat company.

"Is it well, my children?" he called.

"Sahib, it is well," came the quiet answer all down the line.

Then the retirement began in échelon by companies, the regiment always maintaining the same length of front to the advancing enemy.

On the left, resting upon the river, was the Sikh-Dogra double company; then in order, Pathan-Punjabi Mahomedans, Gurkha-Garhwals; and on the right, extended across the Ghazni road, and bearing the main weight of the attack, the Jats.

Old For-ever was always with the rear company of the moment, handling his men as a fine horseman handles a clean-bred horse.

At dusk as they neared the defile, and the gap between the river and the road narrowed, he shortened his front of necessity, and sent word along to continue the movement down the gorge by companies from the left.

"My Jats and I will close the door," he said.

The Sikh company on the extreme left demurred, saying that the Jats as always were going to have the pick of the fighting. It was only when Puffing Billy pointed out that to them had fallen the honour of bearing home the body of the old Colonel, who had himself originally commanded the Sikh company, that they agreed to delay the settlement of their old-standing feud with the Jats and went. The other companies followed in succession and disappeared into the defile.

Old For-ever watched the movement through his glasses. When he turned to find his two Jat orderlies standing between him and the enemy with arms outspread like wings to cover him from the singing bullets, he smiled.

"As a hen gathereth her

chickens under her wings," he murmured, and gave the order to retire.

The Sikhs, as it proved, were wrong. The thick of the fighting was over by the time the Jats turned their faces home. Mahomet Jan's men, it seemed, had had enough. The pressure suddenly ceased, and the main body of the enemy swept off across the river to take the Takht-i-Shah.

"Macpherson treading on their tail, I expect," said Old For-ever.

He retired at his ease through the defile in the growing dusk. There was no nagging, no sniping even, from the heights on either hand. As the Jat company emerged from the gorge, he pulled out his penny whistle.

"And now a little harmony, I think," he said. And in a moment the slow and solemn strains of "Three Blind Mice" rose out of the night with a good many halts and havers above the shuffle of the marching feet. So absorbed was the player that he did not see the little man on the curly-eared Kathiawar stallion standing on a mound beside the road with a lancer orderly as the company marched past. It was not till the horseman spoke that Old For-ever was aware of his presence.

"Is that you, Lad?"

The thin squeak stopped abruptly. The player, for once taken aback, thrust his pipe into his pocket alongside his revolver with much the air of a boy caught cribbing.

"Yes, sir."

The horseman rode up alongside.

"You've saved the column. You've saved Kabul. You've saved the guns," said Bobs huskily.

"Not I, sir," Old For-ever answered simply. "My Jats. To them give any glory—under God."

The little General started off as always at headlong speed for Sherpur, then pulled his horse suddenly on to his haunches, and came back under the brilliant night, feeling his pocket.

"I was forgetting," he said. "A dak's come in. There's a chit for you. I brought it along—in case you got through."

He handed a note; then striking a match and sheltering it in glowing hands bent down from his saddle to light the man on foot.

Old For-ever glanced at the note.

"It's from Marion," he said.

In the darkness the little man above him gave a sigh of satisfaction.

"I thought so," he said, sheltering the match. "Won't you read it?"

The other pocketed the letter.

"When I get in, sir. Thank you. I'll tuck the men up first. They deserve it."

Bobs threw away the match with a little grunt.

"Queer fellow," he said. "Hardly human," and he was gone at a gallop into the night.

VI.

Nobody who saw Pank's Punjabis, dusty, draggled, march into cantonments through Highlanders' Gate that evening, bringing with them the body of their Colonel, all their wounded, and many of their dead, are likely ever to forget it. The men of the garrison turned out to greet them; and the survivors of the shattered cavalry column, horse-gunners, lancers, native cavalry, emerged from lines and messes and even hospitals to cheer. The regiment of many races took the ovation variously—that is to say, according to the company. The Sikhs brandished their rifles and thundered with the glorious swagger of their race, "Granth ke jai (Victory to the Granth)!" the Gurkhas showed their teeth and wagged their tails; while the rear company, the Jats, as always shy, solid, and undemonstrative, hung their heads and glanced up furtively out of the corner of their eyes, to see whether the Major Sahib was satisfied. And there was no doubt he was. When they saw that they broke into the happy laughter of a bevy of girls blessed by a beloved mother.

Hugh Gough, commanding the garrison of Sherpur, who had been told about that note in Old For-ever's pocket, came up when the regiment had reached their lines.

"Won't you fall out, Lad," he said, "and let some of us see your fellows to bed?"

"Very good of you, sir," answered the other. "But I think I'll stand by. There may be a bit of trouble. We're an assorted lot, you know."

It was not till he had seen the men established that he retired to his own quarters. There, by the light of an oil-soaked rag, he read the chit from Marion. It was brief and ran:—

"DARLING,—Had a toughish time but am through now. Our boy is a fine lad and a fighter. He bites his mother daily to the best of his toothless ability. May God love you and keep you and the regiment.

"M."

The Subadar-Major, who as a lad had fought the Sahibs at the crossing of the Sutlej, and then had been at the raising of the regiment as an irregular rifle corps by Pank in the darkest days of the Mutiny, coming to report that the sepoys of the Sikh company were taking off their belts to the Jats, while the merry Gurkhas were bouncing about on the edge of the fray, found his new commanding officer on his knees. Being the gentleman he was, Maharaj Singh saluted the back of the kneeling Sahib, and retired soft-footed as he had come, leaving Old For-ever alone with his joy and his glory.

HUNGARY AND THE HUNGARIANS.

It takes forty-six hours (disturbances permitting) to get to Budapest from London by the best route, which is *viâ* Ostend, Brussels, Cologne, Passau, and Vienna. After a journey of many frontiers, custom-house visitings, paper currencies, and fresh instalments of tickets, the traveller shakes himself free from the Orient express one morning at seven o'clock in Budapest's *Keleti* station to have his visa once again examined and his baggage once more looked through. Half an hour later he can be at the front door of his hotel, wondering which currency is Hungarian, how many bank-notes make a cab-fare, and how many cab-fares make a cab-driver polite. Making a hasty calculation of five shillings at three thousand kronen to the pound, he will probably give enough to make the cabby say, "Kezét csókolom" ("I kiss your hand").

That afternoon he takes a stroll, and remembers he had learned at school that Budapest is two towns—Buda and Pest with the river between them,—and next day he finds Pest is modern and well-built, with boulevards, shops, theatres, and restaurants; and Buda is a straggling town two thousand years old, made of gardens, orchards, hills, balconies, and dipping red roofs. The glory of Budapest is the first impression, but close on it come others. The houses are coloured and ornamented in the spirit of the East; fresh air is excluded by double windows, double curtains, and double doors; news printed of home comes through German sources, and consists of murders in Ireland or troubles in India; no one knows what the next day will bring forth on the exchange; and every restaurant has a *Czigány* band that plays gipsy music all the evening and half of the night. When the visitor has begun to wonder if the gipsies are ever to give him a moment's peace to talk at dinner or fall asleep at night; when he has answered the Englishmen's questions, "How long have you been in Budapest?" "How do you like it?" and dealt with the Hungarians' "How old are you?" "What is your work here?" "How much are you paid?"—by this time the visitor has ceased to be a stranger; and here I shall transfer from the third person of the newcomer to the first person of myself when I had been in Budapest long enough to have had a look round.

The first thing the Hungarians made me feel was their honest welcome of a Britisher. I had come prepared to find they loved us as much as we loved the Germans—or perhaps the rankle might be un-

kinder, for we did not lose the war, and we do not live in a mutilated country. But the war in as far as it concerned Hungary left her where it found her, liking Britain for her strength and fair dealing. There are no admirers in this part of the world of the dozen-cooks'-broth of a Peace Treaty, which set up a second Balkans in Central Europe, but animosity has never been roused against Britain. The British, indeed, who were caught here in 1914 were subjected to no restrictions beyond a periodical appearance at the police office —about which a funny war story is told. A neutral commission arrived in Budapest to inspect the conditions of the British internment camp. "Internment camp? There is none. And all the British 'prisoners' have gone to the races."

So knowing I had come to live on friendly soil, I gladly settled down, and soon gathered a first insight into the ways of the country. In business they are slow ways. I think that "We shall see to it to-morrow," "There is no hurry," "It is impossible to attend to this to-day," must be translatable into Hungarian by words that have worn to monosyllables through constant use. Hungary is the highway to the Balkans (if I did not write from Budapest I might say that she was one of them), and the Eastern dilatoriness and evasion are part of the Magyar character. Hungary might be competent amongst Balkan races, but a comparison with London or Vienna leaves her far behind. Banks and big firms allow letters to lie unanswered for days, then entrust their replies to a post office that takes some days longer to give delivery. Promises, I soon learned, mean nothing, and are just a pleasant form of conversation. Time is valueless—we can have as much of a Hungarian's as we care to take, and are sometimes given more. The Hungarian would like to turn an interview into a discussion of the Peace Treaty, or a talk about the food question, Roumania, and the Jews; then leave the matter for solution—or, better still, further discussion—to a future occasion. Banking arrangements are primitive. A Budapest hotel receiving a cheque does not pay it into its own bank for collection, but sends it to the bank on which it is drawn, the endorsement "Hotel ——" being probably pencilled by the messenger-boy at the counter. Cheques are uncommon things not much to be trusted, so that houses that change foreign drafts have to send along a clerk after the transaction with a portmanteauful of bank notes.

I have had many illustrations of how banks work, and shall choose two amusing ones. The first happened in a leading Budapest bank, where I had an account from which money could be withdrawn only on

the signature of a home official. The authorisations were sent from time to time, the monies being duly dealt with. Some time after the latest withdrawal the bank wrote to say: "In the past we have been unable to verify the signature on the letters you have presented, but out of friendship we have dealt with your account as requested. We shall be glad, however, if you will give us a specimen signature for future reference."

The second example of banking methods occurred when I had made some sterling drafts payable to a firm of money-changers, who because of a hitch did not complete the sale. As the drafts needed more signatures than mine to alter them, they were left defaced on my hands. I mentioned this in course of conversation with a bank manager. "But give them to me," he said at once; "I can sell them." I explained that they were made out payable to another firm, who declined to endorse them. "That doesn't matter," he replied. "I don't know the signature of that firm. Endorse them yourself." My protest against this forgery was not understood at first, but finally met with, "Ah, I understand—you don't want your handwriting recognised at home. Well, then, get one of your clerks to endorse them."

The Hungarian is the most undecided, non-committal person you can find, and everywhere is the lack of sense of time. This being so in business, we need not expect to find pedantic punctuality in social life. Nor do we. Shortly after my arrival a Hungarian friend asked me to dine at half-past eight, at which hour I presented myself. He came at a quarter-past nine, with a charming welcome, but no apology and no feeling that one might be due. A hostess who invites a dozen friends for eight o'clock would be a very surprised lady if she got them all gathered before ten. Invitations have many pitfalls for the newcomer, who might expect to dine at the hour mentioned and to leave before midnight. But Hungarian hospitality is as indefinite as the people. I have made myself the rough working rule that I should arrive an hour and a half late, but I decline to fall into the Hungarian custom of staying until five, six, or seven in the morning.

Not knowing when we may leave lands us in quandaries. An English lady I know tells of an adventure she had when asked to a Hungarian tea-party to meet a Habsburg princess, who lives at Budapest in semi-royal state. At the appointed hour of five my friend was the only arrival, and the drawing-room did not fill until six. It was not until a quarter to seven that the Princess made her appearance—a gracious appearance, for she settled down to enjoy herself leisurely. My friend, who had a dinner engagement

that night, went to take leave of her hostess shortly after seven. "But you can't go before the Princess," exclaimed the scandalised hostess. "Can't I!" said my friend inwardly, while aloud she murmured thanks. She moved round the room admiring the furniture and pictures, and when beside the door opened it and fled.

Hungary's wealth lies in her agriculture, to which she devotes much skill, but the farmer worries little with the financial jugglings involved after he has parted with his grain. As is inevitable, the void has been filled, and we find that all finance and most industry have passed over to the Jews. If the harvest is reaped by Hungarians, the harvest of the harvest goes to the Jews. These latter form 10 per cent of the population on an apportionment of creed; but a division by nationality would show a larger number, for in the stress following the Communism, when race hatred was let loose, many Jews saw the error of their religious convictions. Jews do here what they do elsewhere—live on wealth without producing it,—and in the favourable soil of Hungary's ineptitude and incompetence their roots have stretched far. Hungarians resent this, without striking out against it, or indeed understanding what has caused it. They have a strong and cruel capacity for hating—they hate almost every nation except Britain,—but the most united and vindictive of their hatreds is for the necessary Jews within their gates. My experience is that the Jews' gains are the well-gotten ones of work and thrift, and that their power is not abused. A Hungarian gives one to gather that the gains come from a league with the devil. An "earnest Christian" at home would suggest piety and the beauty of holiness: in Hungary it is understood as some one ready to murder a Jew.

Commerce, then, is left half-indifferently, half-scornfully, to an alien race, and Hungary after her agriculture gives her attention to science and art. Education is good in school and university. Every one speaks German, which is a necessity more than an ornament; English and French too are tackled. Doctors are good; Hungarian research in medicine is fruitful, at least inside Hungary, and according to Hungarians all over the world. Historians are more than good, and many are called to chairs abroad. Art is on a high plane of development, and while owing much in the past to interchange of ideas with Vienna, has always remained national. But the finest achievement of the Hungarians is their town of Budapest. They have built it on the sweep of the Danube where the Buda hills meet the Great Hungarian Plain, and by the river—the artery of Budapest's life—they have put up the Gellert hotel and baths, the statue-covered Gresham pile, the Commercial Bank, and the

Houses of Parliament big enough to govern a continent. A visitor, tired of the doubtful cleanliness and still more doubtful hygiene of Hungarians, may do well to remind himself, "At least they found the place and built the town." A building in Pest is not necessarily old to be beautiful. A block of flats is never merely a utilitarian cube. It takes a country as proud, æsthetic, and careless of cost as Hungary to build on the hill commanding the Danube a three-hundred-roomed castle for a king who occupied it but a few days in the year. Budapesters are proud of their city, and put up a plucky fight in present hard times to keep it from falling to pieces. It needs many a coat of paint, clean, and hitch-up. Now it looks its best in the kindly half-light of evening when the sun disappears behind the King's castle, the river flowing in front under a riot of fire.

Hungarian is spoken as written, but it is unlikely that a foreigner will progress beyond the "Thank you" and "Good-morning" stage. With German known practically as a native language, serious attention is not given to a tongue rarely understood outside the present kingdom of Hungary. The scavenger may know but a smattering of German, but the postman and the old crone who roasts chestnuts in the street are quite at home in it. The exception to the rule would seem to be the telephone girls, who are chosen partly for their slowness and partly for their inability to understand anything but Hungarian. But I digress.

The origin and formation of the Hungarian language are interesting. Of an Asiatic source older than Aryan, it was brought by the nomad Magyars when they wandered from the Ural mountains to their present dwelling on the plains of Hungary. Several Latin words, mostly military, survive here, as in England, from the Roman occupation. Slav neighbours supplied the first vocabulary of religion, for it was they who introduced Christianity. A few isolated words are Turkish. But the Hungarian language has borrowed very little.

Although in its primitive form it is so old, as spoken to-day it is as recent as the nineteenth century. Magyars are loth to admit that until the 1848-9 revolution against Austria had fired the national spirit, Hungarian was not always the talk of the educated. My older friends tell me their fathers were doubtful in accent and grammar; and Franz Liszt, who was born in Hungary, identified himself with Hungarian movements, and latterly lived three months of the year in Budapest, had to learn Hungarian as a foreign language. A hundred years ago German was used in commerce, French in diplomacy, while those who were at court and those who wished they

were divided between German and dog Latin.

Credit for the first enrichment of the Hungarian language belongs to a group of writers in the reign of Maria Theresa—that wonderful woman who, as well as bearing fifteen children, waging nearly that number of wars, building a new palace and beautifying an old, found time in the refinement of her court to encourage all fine arts and to foster and weld together the many national aspirations within her empire. The time—the ebb of the Renaissance revival—was propitious for the real start of Hungarian literature. Writers ceased to draw on classical fables of Greek gods with human frailty of morals, but began to write of local giants and national heroes. Language, requiring now to describe more than a peasant's needs, grew with the literature. The new words were built up on old Magyar sources, and half of the words in common use to-day date from this period. The modern Hungarian language was brought into existence then: it came into universal use after the 1848-9 revolution.

Hungary, within the limitations of a small race and new language, has a rich literature, intensely self-contained, being the work of a self-contained people in a self-contained language. But with a literature so recent, however brilliant in its development, Hungarians must draw on foreign sources. There is point in the remark that the Hungarian author who has most influenced present writing is Sir Walter Scott. In the theatre the French are represented by Molière and Rostand, whose plays appear in the State Theatre's repertory, alternating with Knoblauch's 'Faun' and Shaw's 'Man and Superman.' But the name of names for all time is Shakespeare. We are told here, by the bye, that Hungary is the one country where Shakespeare is properly appreciated. Scandalous infringement of Germany's monopoly!

The painting and sculpture of Hungary are extraordinarily fine, and the country has reason to be proud of her artists. While painting has undoubtedly owed much in the past to interchange of ideas with Vienna, it has always remained essentially national. I should sum up Hungarian nationalism in painting as virility, fierceness, pride, colour, motion,—lack of tenderness and repose. Amongst the finest statues in the world are those carved by Fadrusz János[1]—the equestrian one of King Matthias in Kolozsvar and the one of Maria Theresa that used to stand in Pressburg. The town of Pressburg has now passed to the Czecho-Slovaks, who have zealously rechristened it Bratislava. As Maria Theresa could not have been queen of Czecho-

[1] In Hungarian the surname precedes the Christian name.

Slovakia, which came into existence only after the war, the citizens of that little State were unable to tolerate her statue. First they boarded it up; then a few months ago they further improved the occasion by throwing it into the Danube.

In music the personality that overshadows all others is Liszt —pianist, composer, teacher, man. The music academy is in Franz Liszt Street; a statue of Franz Liszt stands over the door; the teaching inside carries on the tradition of Franz Liszt. Unlike the subject of most statues, Liszt is as famous now as when the carving was made. The director of piano studies is Szendy Árpád, and nothing can be more delightful than a morning spent at the conservatoire in his company. We can listen to his advanced pupils, soon to be pianists in Vienna and London; we can peep in on a class of singers being coached in operatic rôles; we can see the original manuscripts of Haydn, Beethoven, and Liszt; or look at the casts, paintings, sketches, and caricatures of Liszt. One day I was allowed to play the Opus 78 Sonata on the piano Beethoven had used when he worked out the composition. It was with reverent fingers I touched the yellowed ivories. I like listening to Szendy's inexhaustible fund of stories that come round sooner or later to Liszt. The worse a pupil played, the more did Liszt appear enchanted. To get the bite of his tongue showed a pupil he was worth the trouble. Szendy tells a story against himself. He had finished playing a study in class, when Liszt remarked, "It needs more light and shade." Another week's work, as so often happens, made the study worse rather than better; but it had to be played at the next lesson. It received the comment, "It has at least more shade." Inside the academy we are never far from Liszt. Once I heard a boy question the spirit in which his teacher wished him to play a Bach invention. "Liszt played it like this," came the reply, which left the pupil little to argue.

Music in Hungary is not just an accomplishment of the leisured. The herd-boy sings in the field; he cuts himself a reed if he has no better instrument; and he probably makes his own tunes. It is a small country, so we can understand why Hungarian folk-songs are more or less alike: they all give a feeling of baffled strength and hopelessness. Anything that is the expression of a whole people must be interesting, but Hungarian music supplied by gipsy bands with my every dinner has been "good measure pressed down and running over." It may be true that there are six thousand different Hungarian songs, but they all have the same gusts subsiding in a minor cadence, the same formlessness and lack of rhythm. Although I have served a good apprenticeship with bagpipes,

I do not always know where one tune ends and another begins. (The *Czigány* band passes straight from one to another, until it stops to thank a passer-by for a few kronen dropped in the plate.) *Czigány* music is as dreadful as the flat Hungarian plain—unceasing, windy, shapeless. The folk-lore, I am told, is sad, because the people have been oppressed so much. Being unable to count, as just explained, I cannot tell if I have heard the whole six-thousand repertoire or not; but if I have, I know that five thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine airs are sad ones. Gipsy music means a gathering together in a minor key, a note as long as the first violin's bowing powers will allow, a violent crescendo and stop, a timeless rush on the part of some solo instrument, a moan from the entire band. The Magyar *Czigány* idiom is found in the rhapsodies of Liszt, which are constructed from folk-songs. I may mention, however, that Liszt took not only the best of them, but also the best of their fragmentary parts. Next he livened them up. Even then he was obliged to transcribe them in free time with a plentiful use of grace notes.

As the *Czigány* folk-songs are part of the people's life, it is not as unfair to comment on Hungary's music by what is fiddled in cafés as it would be to judge our own by what cinema bands supply. Until the romantic period of music the gipsies possessed the field so exclusively that the classic movement was unfelt, and gave but one half-foreign composer, the symphonist Volkmann. The romanticists, when they came, pulled together the structure, but their idiom never varied far from the *Czigány* form. All the music Liszt wrote after the age of forty is full of Hungarian expression. This can be traced even into some of Wagner—the Ride of the Valkyrie, for instance, or the 'Flying Dutchman' *motif*,—for Wagner undoubtedly learned much from Liszt. Goldmark's opera, 'The Queen of Sheba,' is altogether Hungarian. And there are a mass of Hungarian operettists, including Lehar, who started his musical profession as a military band conductor.

But the literature, painting, and music of a country are not such everyday affairs to the settler as the conditions of living. Although each day now brings a fresh increase in prices, the man with pounds or dollars to sell can still live comfortably. At the moment of writing, living is estimated to cost roughly one hundred times more than before the war, while the sterling exchange stands at one hundred and sixty times its old figure. This gives a pleasant margin to the foreigner, but the Hungarian's position is different. Those on the land—52 per cent of the population—are little to be pitied, for their wages are often paid in kind. The factory

worker may or may not be better off than he used to be; and the shopkeeper, although mulcted by tax and levy, earns on a turnover at new prices. But the fixed-wage earner, in bank, assurance company, or railway office, is given only ten to twenty times his pre-war salary. He may economise by not buying clothes, giving up amusement, eating meat but twice a week, selling carpets and chairs; but to live costs him blood, not money. Worst of all are the old pensioned civil servants, the war victims, and the elderly spinsters who had scraped together now worthless savings,—they do not live: they starve. What made a comfortable year's income before the war can now be spent by a foreigner on a dinner for four at the Ritz Hotel. A soldier who lost a leg in the war has a pension of threepence per month; a man totally blinded one of eightpence. Salaries of Government servants range from the clerk's of ten shillings a month to the minister's of four pounds. Some rebates on food are also allowable—a concession worth at most twenty-five shillings a month. Can we be surprised that corruption has crept in?

Conditions in Budapest are fairly representative of Hungary, except that on the land food is nearer, which makes living easier. Then the peasant, more than the townsman, is proud, indifferent to others' welfare, ignorant of the interdependence of men and nations. Requiring nothing he gives nothing, which attitude for all its callousness is better than the outstretched hand of the Budapest beggar. The peasants' pride and ignorance are typified by their having large houses and living huddled together in one room. The houses are built in rows, not facing the street, but one front looking on the blank uninteresting back of its neighbour. The best room has a side window to the street, but I need scarcely mention that a best room is opened only for marriages and funerals. Ventilation is much the same in the country as in the town. Fresh air in private houses is a matter of individual idiosyncracy, but it may safely be assumed that no orphanage or hospital is chilled by an open window between October and April. In the country fuel and bed-clothes are scarce, and it is not realised that clean air heats more quickly than putrid. But if oxygen is not made a pet of in country hospitals, plenty of other things are. Hospital chickens sample the community cabbage in the kitchen; the hospital cat wanders, a welcome friend, from one infectious ward to another; and on his lair in the theatre the hospital dog slumbers comfortably, undisturbed by the frantic sterilising of the operating-table.

Every one in Hungary is constantly wondering, What are the country's hopes of reconstruction? How can she best

pull herself together? It is easy to criticise and point to the many obvious things that have not been begun. Everywhere is feud, rupture, family jars. It needs only a journey from one of Austria-Hungary's Succession States to another, with frontier difficulties and nuisances, for us to see that the vexatious restrictions exist for no reasonable purpose, but only out of animosity. Indeed, we need not stir abroad to learn even this. The Hungarian post-office tells us a four-and-a-half kronen stamp will carry a letter to Roumania, while Roumania thinks six kronen should be gummed on—the result being that a letter accepted in Hungary as correct is delivered in Roumania with a three-kronen fine. This ridiculous state of affairs is typical of the mentality of the peoples. If Austria-Hungary had to be split up into half a dozen states with different governments and different currencies, why can the composite parts not see their best hope lies in a union of economic interests rather than in an aggravation of difficulties that leads to retaliation and further hatred?

Britain is so remote that we find the deadlock hard to understand. We live on an island by ourselves (the Irish having their own over the second channel), and whatever our troubles, we do not have Balkan neighbours. Our diplomatic representations, coming from a powerful nation, receive attention. We, too, are a commercial race, who can make agreements for mutual advantage: we can be on business terms without necessarily being on cordial terms. And we can live in the present, which Hungarians have never learned to do. Still it can be understood that a country bleeding from her mutilations lives for a space in the pride of the past.

An Eastern proverb says troubles sent by Heaven may be avoided, but from those we bring on ourselves there is no escape. Hungary's worst troubles are of her own making—her internal disunion and her bad relations with her neighbours. The first point I shall return to later, and shall deal now with the second. Could we expect that Hungary, to whom business of race is more than business of business, should have good relations with the neighbours who helped in her dismemberment? It was hard to bear the loss of country to the Czechs, who had fought against the Entente throughout the war, and ended by becoming an ally in a hurry. (It is Hungary's feelings, not Slovakia's, that I describe.) But however sorely Slovakia was grudged, the iron that entered into the soul was Transylvania's going to the lower civilisation of Roumania.

North, south, east, and west, Hungary lost her provinces until she was left one-third of the size she had been for a thousand years. On the east are the Roumanians, who, it will be remembered, came to

Budapest with an occupying army to quell the outbreak of Bolshevism. When they were forced to withdraw, they took with them everything they could lay hands on. Official statistics record that Hungary was left with 31 per cent of her locomotives, 21 per cent of her tenders, 18 per cent of her passenger coaches, and 17 per cent of her goods trucks, the percentages being based on her 1918 quantities. Much of the loot may be seen across the Roumanian frontier, where it has been abandoned to rot and rust. Other "chief articles of plunder" are machinery, cattle, and horses. As statistics often convey less than a simple remark, I will add that during a year spent in Central Europe I have never heard any one say a good word of a Roumanian. On Hungary's west is Austria, former partner in the Dual Monarchy. The alliance between the two peoples had never been a cordial one: Hungarians chafed at their dependence, and resented obeying an emperor in Vienna; Austrians looked down on Hungary as a Balkan colony. In prosperity they jogged along somehow in double harness, but in 1914 the unequal yoke-fellows strained to part company. Hungary, while ready for a little war with the Serbs, did not want the bigger one in which she felt Austria and Germany had involved her. As the war lengthened, bad relations grew worse. Austria thought, and still thinks, that Hungary, who had the food, did not share it round; and Hungary complains that her provisions were taken from her to feed strangers. Stories of the war as related in the different countries are worth a caustic listening. In Pest I hear how the Hungarian troops were always given the hardest positions to hold, for the Austrians and Czechs ran away; and in Vienna or Bratislava it is the same tale with the names changed. But whatever Hungary's grievances, they may be forgotten in sympathy for a country with a currency of waste-paper and a capital to support the size of Vienna. Certain it is that Austria has little to exchange with her neighbour. North and south are the Slavs, and it is on Hungary that their menace is most dangerous. Hungary did not need the Karl *Putsch* with the Czecho-Slovak and Jugo-Slav instant mobilisations to know how small an excuse the Little Entente needed to march over the border.

But Hungary's hatred goes deeper than recent provocation: it has always lived in the heart of her people. To listen to Hungarians discussing any foreign race is to feel plunged back into the cruelties of past centuries. And the hatred goes wider than neighbouring countries. Germany is detested for scheming and bringing on the war, and France is blamed for the rigour of the Peace Treaty and for her insistence on reparations. The British, however, are liked, and

I succumb to the temptation of bringing in an irrelevant story that may explain the reason of our popularity. A Hungarian friend of mine, who is a staunch royalist, was received last year by the German ex-Kaiser at Doorn. The conversation turned on the characteristics of the various ex-enemies. "The English!" said ex-Kaiser Wilhelm, "they may be enemies, but they are always gentlemen."

Those who know Hungary regret her attitude towards her neighbours, but they understand it, and they know it will not change. Let us pass on to consider Hungary within. Hoping to find the embodiment of fine nationalism passed through the fire of recent catastrophe, we go to a sitting of the National Assembly. Unless Deputy Giesswein is making one of his Scotch-sermon speeches to a thin house, we are at once in the thick of tumult, recrimination, and dissension. The talk varies little with the debate. One member mourns that his family burying-vault is now in a foreign land; another protests that Hungary cannot and will not pay reparations. Then perhaps Count Apponyi, a fine white-haired old man, will rise from the Royalist benches to mourn Hungary's degradation. He is followed by one of the numerous land party, composed of peasants, indignant that they have at last been reached by the tax-gatherer's hand, and anxious for any legislation that will keep up the price of maize at the highest possible figure. Next will be a tirade against the Jews, which grows in violence until the Speaker suspends the sitting. Through all the volubility we listen in vain for one hope of reconstruction, one word of policy for the future, one attempt to face the actual position.

Hungary needs some courage to face her position. She has many glories of the past (real and imaginary), and the only future she can look to is that of a fifth-rate power, with no wealth but her farms and vineyards, and no one to govern but her own Magyars. More than a generation will have to pass before the reunion of old Hungary moderates from practical politics to pious aspiration. Her talents are limited; she has no friends; she has no towns left to her but Budapest; she feels she has nothing to lose and is ready to take a gambler's chance in a new war; the remaining third of her territory has reparations hanging over its head. And through it all are intrigue and corruption, and the warring of factions of Royalist and Republican.

A nation that is primitive and ignorant may need to be ruled rather than rule, but I think Hungary would find her bearings better if her Government were more representative of her people. Only since the war did the franchise become universal; and this year the right was withdrawn, when

the Prime Minister reduced the number of those who might vote, and, on the grounds that he could not otherwise be responsible for order, made the ballot in country places an open one. The power in Hungary is usurped and inclined to be meddlesome. *On peut tout faire avec les baïonnettes excepté s'asseoir dessus.* Hungary has achieved much since her upheaval, but she has not started to settle down.

The state of affairs during King Karl's life was unsettling—Hungary was a kingdom without a king,—but as I write the flag on the Palace flies at half-mast, most of the buildings float black streamers, and the nation is at one in its sympathy for the king's ill-fated life and his widowed queen's bereavement. While he lived his following was small, and limited to landowners and members of old families, some having a personal loyalty, others a resentment that they had been forced by foreign powers to dethrone their crowned king. But generally there was small affection for Karl, who had become Hungarian when he could no longer be Austrian. He had spent little of his time in Budapest, and had shown scant interest in the Hungarian nation. That this had deeply wounded the people's pride was made very evident during his second *Putsch*. On the Sunday when, with his army, he had got as far as Buda Örs, eight kilometres from Budapest, the capital wore its usual appearance, except that several unshaved sentries had been posted outside the royal castle to challenge any motor-cars that might contain the king. While it was impossible not to be interested in a battle outside the gates, the people's thoughts were mostly taken up with the handing over of Western Hungary, the movements of the Czechs, the Serbs, and the exchange, and the rising price of foodstuffs.

If during Karl's life disinclination for him extended to his line, there is now a strong reaction in favour of his eldest son, Prince Otto. Hungarians wish a king and need a king. Popular sentiment loves pomp, processions, symbols, and is all for a monarchy; and Hungarians are shrewd enough to have learned that no nation in modern Europe has achieved true greatness as a republic. Hungary has never thought of herself except as a kingdom, and only last week seventeen schoolboys were tried in court for distributing pamphlets that advocated a Hungarian republic. To have a non-Habsburg king elected by popular vote would be impossible, for this would give the king of a political party, not of a country; and the only candidate who would find universal favour would be the one whose disastrous programme was to reunite old Hungary. Nor is there any overwhelming majority in favour of one man.

It is opportune to recall how Prince Otto's claim to the

throne stands in the constitution of Hungary. Following King Karl's detention last year, the Government were forced to make legislation that formally deposed their king. The bill they passed on 3rd November 1921 had three clauses, of which the first deposed King Karl; the second abrogated the Pragmatic Sanction, which had enacted that the Emperor of Austria should also be King of Hungary; and the third reaffirmed that Hungary was a monarchy. The Allies, no doubt prompted by the Little Entente, submitted that this bill did not forbid that a Habsburg should again reign, to which Hungary replied that the bill, which had been a difficult and a humiliating one, was already law. And the Government at that time gave their honourable assurance that they should not elect a king without the consent of the Allies.

I am not rash enough to venture on a prophecy of what even one month will bring forth in Central Europe, but I hope there will be a continuance of the present order with Admiral Horthy as regent. The only alternatives—proclamation of a king or of a republic—are fraught with dangers, and Horthy has accomplished much. During the past eighteen months conditions of public safety have improved out of recognition: Jews are no longer beaten in the streets, and people may walk abroad after dark without fear of being murdered. When Bolshevism swept over the land, Horthy was the only man strong enough to muster a party and fight it. Coming into power after two revolutions, he kept control through the pillaging of the Roumanian occupation. And all the while his task was of the most formidable. The country was surrounded by enemies who had the ears of the Entente, and whose policy, put bluntly, was that Hungary should not recover to become their rival; the political parties within were totally disunited and generally at a deadlock; the popularity of the regency was on the wane; and Horthy's personal feelings, although subservient to his patriotism, were all of loyalty to King Karl. Now the chief cause of internal disunion no longer exists, the regency is securer, and the problem of kingship may be left to solve itself naturally during the ten years of Prince Otto's minority.

W. D. MACNAUGHTON.

MURDER DISQUALIFIES.

BY ALAN GRAHAM.

CHAPTER XIII.

MRS MURDOCH and Jean Rintoul entered the policies of Dorning House by the East Lodge. No one was up, but the gate was not locked, and they had no difficulty in getting through. According to instructions received from the minister, the bicycle-lamps were extinguished as soon as the public road was left behind. There was no need to announce their approach to a possible enemy.

As they rode up the drive they were shrouded in a darkness and a silence that made them both tremble. The unknown that lay before them, with all its possibilities, was surely sufficient to unnerve two unprotected girls. They pedalled along in silence, neither caring to break the stillness of the night.

Suddenly, somewhere ahead, a strange light flickered—or rather, first there was a weird lightening of the darkness, and then an irregular ebb and flow of luminosity which waxed stronger with each passing moment. A distant purring broke gradually upon their ears, and suddenly, rounding a curve in the drive, they saw, coming from the direction of the West Lodge, the glaring headlights of a motor-car.

"Oh!" gasped Jean. "It must be Uncle Rufus!"

"Hurry, hurry!" cried Mrs Murdoch, putting all her weight upon the pedals.

They had the shorter distance to go, but the car was coming up at three times their speed. Then, as they swung round into the curve in front of the house, there was a sudden shout, and they were seized and dragged from their cycles. Jean heard the thud of running feet and her own name called gaspingly. She called aloud in answer.

Next moment they were in a full glare of light, as the great car swung round towards the house. Jean saw a scarred and determined face — sufficiently villainous in the strong lights and black shadows cast by the head-lamps — leaning over her, and knew that she was gripped tightly in the arms belonging to it.

"I do not wish to hurt you, but—you cannot go on," said a voice, civilly enough.

Then all became hopeless confusion. There was a rush —she recognised for a moment Mr Murdoch and Rab Wilson

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—and then a counter-rush, as it seemed by a mob, and her friends were swept away like seaweed before the tide, and still she hung in the close embrace of those iron arms.

The car had now stopped before Dorning House, but as it had swung up a weird figure stood upon the footboard, hanging to a bracket and shouting wildly—

"A Francesca! A Francesca!"

It was Bubbly, his opera-hat tilted precariously, his coat open, displaying a wide expanse of white shirt-front, and his eyes starting from his head with excitement.

"A Francesca! A Francesca!" he shouted again as the car stopped, and he jumped to the ground to swing open the door for his mistress, swaying slightly upon his feet as he clung for support to the handle.

"Look out for Rintoul, boys," cried McNeil, fully occupied with Jean, who struggled angrily in his embrace. "This is the danger-point. Leave the Signorina to Owen, and keep your eyes skinned. I don't like the look of things. It seems too easy."

Francesca stepped from the car into the full glare of the head-lights, and the whole scene at once took on the air of a stage setting. Her crimson cloak had slipped down over her arms, and the searching lights played full upon her flushed face and snow-white shoulders. Had an orchestra suddenly struck up and her wonderful voice rung out into the night, not one of the spectators would have seen in it aught incongruous.

She stretched an arm gracefully towards the door of Dorning House.

"Knock, Honourable Owen," she said, and her rich voice stirred her supporters to renewed enthusiasm, and roused in the others, to whom it was unknown, a new interest in the strange and fascinating figure.

Bubbly advanced—none too steadily—and mounted the wide steps to the door.

He gave a resounding double knock that jarred strangely on the spectators.

"Open, in the name of your new mistress, Signorina Francesca Marinetti."

This was intended to be impressive, and might have been so had not Bubbly hiccupped in the middle of the "Francesca."

There was a sudden silence—a silence pregnant with the unknown. Then, within the house, dully, a door banged. A flickering glimmer of light shone in the glass above the door, and shuffling footsteps could be heard within. There was the rattle of the chain, the scrounge of an unoiled bolt turning in the lock, and slowly the door opened, to show old Ronald Aitken, an oil-lamp held high in his hand, and his old eyes blinking helplessly in the glare of the head-lights.

"Wha is't, an' what is't ye want?" he asked, as a matter of principle, for well he knew the answer to his second question at least.

"It is I, Francesca Marinetti, the daughter of Margaret Rintoul, come to claim my rightful inheritance," answered Francesca from the middle of the stage.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bubbly, wildly waving his hat. By this time he probably imagined himself a chorus of villagers.

"Aweel," said Ronald with a sigh, as he opened the door wide, "I maun follow my instructions. Come awa' ben, mistress."

Francesca advanced to the foot of the steps, and had her foot upon the first, ready to mount to the door, when a heavy tread echoed through the hall, and a loud voice called—

"Hold!"

Behind old Ronald Aitken, and towering above him, appeared the leonine head of Rufus Rintoul.

"You're too late, niece. I regret to disappoint you, but you'll admit you were warned."

Then, from the darkness, came the voice of McNeil—

"He has broken the rules. He was in the house before sunrise. Mr Aitken, I claim a foul."

"You're right," cried Murdoch, in the grip of Televant and Lindsay. "Rufus Rintoul, you have not played fair."

Ronald Aitken shook his head sadly.

"Dinna forget it's me that's the judge," he said slowly. "An' ye can tak' it frae me that he wusna in the hoose twa meenutes syne. I was expec'in' this. I ken fine hoo he got in, an' I canna say but what he is within his richts."

"Though fine you'd like to, you old scoundrel," added Rufus, who now stepped forward and took the centre of the doorway.

McNeil, seeing that there was no longer need to hold her, released his prisoner.

"Miss Rintoul, I apologise," he said shortly. "Acting for Signorina Marinetti, it was my duty to hold you back."

Jean said nothing, but shook herself, as though to remove a feeling infinitely distasteful to her.

Mrs Murdoch, her husband, and Rab Wilson were also released from restraint, and the whole party gathered instinctively in a semicircle round the door, leaving Francesca in the open centre, facing her triumphant uncle.

A startling change had come over Francesca. The crimson cloak had dropped to the ground, where it lay like a pool of blood at her feet. She stood erect and graceful in unrelieved black, her face now as white as her arms and breast, and her great black eyes burning like beacons, as they rested fixedly upon the tall figure smiling contemptuously in the doorway.

For what seemed an interminable time she stood statu-

esque, all eyes upon her in anticipation of something—something strange, even terrible—they knew not what.

Then suddenly her rigid pose changed, and she became all lithe motion. Stooping in a flash, she gathered up the hem of her skirt. For a bare moment there was a glimpse of long silk stocking and graceful leg, and the next, stiletto in hand, she was half-way up the steps, the gleaming blade poised for the heart of Rufus Rintoul.

"Remember the will—murder disqualifies!" cried Rufus, in no way disconcerted.

He still wore the smile of amusement that might have greeted the play of some wayward child.

Who knows if the warning would have stopped her? It is doubtful, and it was left in doubt, for Neil McNeil darted up the steps and seized the hand that held the stiletto.

"Come, Signorina," he said quietly. "That will do no good."

"You poor creature," she said bitterly, turning upon him a look of unutterable contempt. "Guid sakes, why did I ever trust you with my cause? As for you"—she turned in a flash upon Rufus once more—"you smile upon me now, but—I will have my revenge."

Turning, she came slowly down the steps, her dagger still in her hand.

"Come, Honourable Owen, take me away."

Bubbly, sobered and subdued, led her towards the waiting car.

McNeil, stung by her words of contempt, and fired by a sudden idea, moved amongst his men.

Suddenly his voice barked sharply in an order.

"Now, boys, forward."

There was a rush for the door.

Rufus Rintoul watched the advance contemptuously.

"Brute force? A poor move, McNeil, and not unexpected. Stand clear, Ronald."

As the foremost of the attackers reached the top step, the door slammed in his face, and the bolt shot raucously.

"The windows," shouted McNeil. "Smash one, and make a way in. We'll turn him out by force."

The dead Laird had, however, anticipated tactics of this character, and during the last year of his life rendered Dorning House impregnable to attack by defending all the lower windows with stout iron bars. It was not his intention that the citadel should be carried by assault.

Having made this discovery, McNeil gave up the attack as hopeless. He turned to find the car gone, bearing with it his mistress and Owen.

"Well, boys, we can do no more at present," he said gloomily. "We'd better follow the Signorina."

Throughout these stirring incidents, Jean and Mrs Murdoch had remained passive by their supporters, the minister and

Rab Wilson. They were helpless, and knew it, against such superior numbers, and they stayed but to see the end and learn what they could.

With the disappearance of the car, the inky blackness of night had apparently fallen once more upon the scene; but gradually, as the effect of the head-lights wore off, the faint anæmic light of dawn became visible, each moment growing stronger. McNeil became aware of the little group huddled to one side, watching, and after a momentary hesitation, strode over to it.

"Well," he said bitterly, "we're all in the same boat now, so there need be no ill-feeling between us. We had to hold you back, but you would have done the same for us if you had been the stronger party. I hope neither of the ladies was handled roughly, but if they were, I can but offer my apologies."

"That's very fairly spoken, sir," replied Murdoch. "I don't see that we can owe you any grudge. What do you say, Jean?"

Jean Rintoul, with the memory—nay, the very feel—of those encircling arms about her, was not prepared for such a ready forgiveness.

"There is certainly no need for us to detain the gentleman," she said coldly, ungenerously.

Then, in the gathering light, as he turned to go, chilled by the girl's tone, McNeil suddenly recognised Rab Wilson.

"Oho, Rab," he said, with a slight laugh as he realised how he had been misled. "So you were in this all along, but were too cute to give yourself away. Well, I can't blame you, and, after all, it hasn't done you much good."

"You're richt there, Neil," agreed Rab. "But, man, I was sorry tae see ye fechtin' for a furrin play-actin' body like yon when there's a guid Scottish lass could dae wi' a' the help she can get haud o'."

"We'll leave our respective mistresses out of it, Rab, or we'll soon be at loggerheads. Well, good morning, good people. Here endeth the first lesson."

McNeil raised his cap and returned to the party who awaited him, and immediately after the whole seven trooped off down the drive, their hunched shoulders telling their tale of disappointment as plainly as though they had called it aloud.

Only McNeil of the seven had anything to rouse him from the despair in which the party was sunk, and that was a memory and a sensation. All the way back to Edinburgh he felt a strange tingling of the arms—aye, and even of the broad chest—where he had held Jean Rintoul clasped.

Did he like it or did he not? He could not say. At one moment he tried to shake off this new and alarming sensation, at the next he was de-

liberately recalling it. Several times he caught himself curving his arms and clasping together his hands, and then, "Damme, am I a grown man or a fool boy?" he would exclaim to himself.

Meanwhile the Manse party tramped gloomily homeward, Murdoch and Rab wheeling the cycles.

"I like your friend Neil, Mr Wilson," declared Mrs Murdoch, breaking a long silence. "He looks a real decent sort."

"Oh, there's nowt agin him," replied Rab, with true Scottish enthusiasm.

"But as for your cousin, Jean, she's just about the limit. I'd love to see her on the stage, though."

"My dear Clarice, I take no responsibility for her," replied Jean, rather crossly for her, whose temper was usually of the sunniest. "I thought she was a terrible person, both she and all her ragtag and bobtail of hangers-on. Did you see that dreadful dissipated man in evening dress? I should call him typical of the whole party. I would rather see my Uncle Rufus in possession than a creature who has such friends."

"Little Jean is fed up," said the minister's wife, putting one arm kindly around her friend. "And no wonder, after such a disappointment. Never mind, dear, Old Bill must think again. Your Uncle Rufus has got to stop there a month, and lots of things may happen inside of a month."

Curiously, however, it was not the disappointment that had soured Jean Rintoul's usually sweet temper. It was the memory of those strong arms that had encircled her slim body, and held her so that she was helpless. She could not forget, she could not even cease to feel, that sensation of absolute helplessness.

CHAPTER XIV.

On a charmingly sunny afternoon, two days later, Neil McNeil lay stretched upon a green velvety slope within what had, centuries ago, been the courtyard of Dorning Castle. There was little to suggest the courtyard now, for the ground rose irregularly towards one end, and was completely grown over with fine close grass, interspersed with patches of deep green moss. The walls on either side of the slope had crumbled away, those at top and bottom remained more or less extant, but self-sown shrubs and stunted trees grew in the interstices of the dilapidated walls, while ferns and moss almost obscured the jointing of the stones.

Though April had not yet given place to May, it was delightfully warm in the sheltered sunshine, and McNeil lay upon his back, knees drawn up and hands behind his head,

lazily smoking an old briar, and meditating on the puzzling topic that was in the minds of so many others—how did Rufus Rintoul get into Dorning House?

After the inglorious return to Edinburgh there had been a heated discussion on the subject. Francesca had been definite in her view, even dogmatic. The butler—Ronald Aitken—was a double-dyed old scoundrel, and had undoubtedly been bribed by Rufus Rintoul. In this view Francesca had the support of the bulk of her followers—all of them, indeed, except Neil.

This led to the renewal of an unpleasantness that had given promise of being permanently buried. Francesca had made much of Neil on his return. She had striven to wipe out the impression made by the hasty words spoken in the moment of her disappointment, and McNeil had readily met her half-way; but on his refusal to admit Ronald Aitken's perfidy, Francesca had turned upon him once more. There could not be a doubt—there was not a doubt—that the butler had been bribed, and it could only be McNeil's Scottish pride that made him refuse to admit it.

McNeil did not agree. He remembered Ronald Aitken from his boyhood, knew him to be a man of recognised high principle and an elder in the Kirk, and pointed out that the dead Laird would not have put him in a position of such power unless he had believed him to be thoroughly trustworthy. No, he had argued, Rufus Rintoul had some means of entry into the house that was known only to himself and to Ronald Aitken. The old man's words on the appearance of his new master showed that he knew, but was powerless to move.

McNeil had become thoroughly unpopular, not only with his mistress, but with the majority of her staff. There was no open break, however. He was still nominally the leader of the party; but when he suggested that he should return to Dorning and make the Rintoul Arms his headquarters, so that he might be in touch with every development of the situation, he could see that Francesca jumped at the idea of getting rid of him, though ostensibly favouring the soundness of his scheme.

She hired for him a powerful little two-seater car, so that he might be independent of the desultory train service, and it was arranged that at least one of the staff should be constantly on duty at the hotel, so that, should he return with news of importance, he could quickly get in touch with his mistress.

During his absence the command was to be taken over by the Honourable Thomas Owen, who was rapidly becoming indispensable to Francesca.

Now, after twenty-four hours spent in Dorning, Neil was without confirmation of his theory. He had haunted the

bar parlour of the Rintoul Arms, spending all the previous evening there, and listening to the gossip of the village, which dealt exclusively with the Rintoul inheritance; but there was nothing said that gave him a hint of how Rufus got into the house. It was well known throughout the village that he was in possession, but the sensational happenings in the darkness of dawn had been unwitnessed.

McNeil had come up against a dead end. Assuming that he was right, that there was some secret means of entry into Dorning House, how could he possibly discover it?

Disappointed and disheartened, he had made his way into Dorning Castle gardens by the same means that he had used on the morning when he had taken Bubbly to spy out the land, and settled himself down in the sheltered interior of the courtyard to meditate lazily on the position.

He became gradually aware of movement in his neighbourhood. The faint impact of feet upon the turf and the rattle of a loosened stone made him look up curiously to see who might be the intruder. A charming picture met his eye, and his arms tingled again at the welling-up of a recollection from which his mind had never been really free since that morning in the darkness outside Dorning House.

It was Jean Rintoul. Unconscious of his presence, for he was partially hidden from her by a heap of ruined masonry, she was settling down in the shelter of the courtyard wall with a book.

McNeil saw her first as she paused, glancing round to find a spot that pleased her. She wore a simple frock of voile, white with narrow black stripes, that made her appear taller than in truth she was. The skirt belled out like an inverted campanula bloom, and displayed beneath it trim ankles clad in black silk, and little patent-leather shoes with great bows that made her feet seem smaller even than they were. A wide white hat of fine straw, trimmed simply with bunched black ribbon, crowned her brown hair.

McNeil held his breath and watched. She chose a little mound of soft turf at the foot of an isolated piece of moss-grown wall, and threw herself down, spreading her skirt gracefully around her, so that only the tip of one small shoe peeped out. Then, opening her book, she resigned herself to meditation A melancholy look was on her pretty face, and, as she thought, a little frown came upon her brow.

It dawned upon McNeil suddenly that he was spying, that he had no right to gloat over the picture when she did not know that she was observed. It would have occurred to him sooner had not a strange feeling of familiarity, a sensation of having taken part in the

same scene before, invaded his mind and obscured his thought. Some chord of memory was touched, and he felt upon the verge of a discovery.

Even as he rose to make his presence known, recollection came upon him in a flood; but he had no further time to think, for at his first movement Jean Rintoul saw him, and sat up stiffly, hostility in her face and in her whole pose.

McNeil crossed the courtyard and stopped before her, his cap in his hand.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Jean Rintoul resentfully.

The old castle courtyard was a favourite spot to her, and she felt that McNeil had usurped her privacy. It was all of a piece with her recent experience of him.

"Do you know," said McNeil slowly, a curious expression upon his scarred face, "that many, many years ago, on this same spot, you asked me that same question, Miss Rintoul?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, and I prefer to be alone," replied Jean bluntly.

"But surely you remember——"

"The only recollection I have of you is not at all pleasant," Jean cut him short. "It hardly amounted to an introduction, I think."

"That I have apologised for already, Miss Rintoul, and my presence here to-day is quite accidental. Indeed, I was here some time before you."

"Oh, if you wish *me* to go——"

"Now, please don't wilfully misunderstand me. I merely wanted to make it clear that my presence here was quite accidental."

"I understand," said Jean coldly. "Then there is nothing more to be said."

She picked up her book and bent her eyes to the open page, as plain a dismissal as one could wish. McNeil hesitated, and would have slunk off with his tail between his legs, but for that illuminating memory which had suddenly unfolded itself to his mind.

"Miss Rintoul," he stammered, "I am loath to intrude on your privacy, but your appearance a few minutes ago suddenly brought back to my mind an incident that happened here a great many years ago. Don't you remember?"

He looked upon the crown of the white straw hat, all he could see of Jean Rintoul. He waited for it to change its angle and show the piquant face beneath, but he waited in vain. Jean had given him his dismissal, and was determined not to reopen the conversation.

"Your face suddenly became familiar to me. You were no longer the lady whom I—met the other morning, but a little girl whom I knew years ago."

Beneath her sheltering hat Jean was boiling with indignation. How dare he continue

to address her after she had clearly given him to understand that his presence was unwelcome!

The hat tipped back sharply and Neil looked into two hostile brown eyes.

"I have no recollection of you whatever. Your face is as strange to me as it is distasteful."

McNeil raised his cap, bowed, and moved slowly away.

The touch of a soft hand upon his arm gave him pause.

"I'm sorry. I didn't quite mean that," said Jean softly. "It was said before I thought."

"Don't worry. I know I'm a bit of a freak, but you won't be troubled with me again," said Neil, looking down with a kindly smile upon the pained upturned face.

"But I must explain," cried Jean desperately. "I cannot let you go thinking that what I said was meant personally. Oh — how can I explain? Listen. We are on opposite sides. Your behaviour to me that morning was—abominable, and I hate you for it. What I said just now was meant to refer to that—was meant generally. It—I had no intention of—of——"

"I understand, Miss Rintoul," interrupted Neil gently, suffering in the girl's pain. "You just wanted to get at me on general principles, and you had no thought of my scarred face. Don't worry. I'm not a bit sensitive about it in any case, but I quite understand that you did not mean that. Now I'll take myself off and leave you in possession. Perhaps some time in the future you will give me a chance to recall to your mind the boy you played with, the boy who shouted down the well. Good afternoon."

He went hurriedly. Jean stood for a moment, pale-faced and rigid, then, turning, she hurried back to her little grassy mound, threw herself down and, face buried in arms, burst into a storm of sobs.

How could she have said such a thing? She knew his face had been injured in the war—Rab Wilson had told her so,—yet in her anger she had forgotten and said what she had never meant. It was not that alone, however. Why should she be so obsessed with this man? Ever since he had imprisoned her in his arms, even now as she lay sobbing upon the turf, she could feel the pressure of those arms about her, controlling her every movement. It filled her with impotent rage. She wanted to *hate* the man, even while her reason told her that she had no just cause of enmity.

He, for his part, went off with his mind so full of this early memory that he quickly forgot the details of his recent meeting with Jean. He was living in the past, but with more than a mere thought for the present.

He felt the need of movement. He must follow this thing up. Leaving the castle

gardens, he set out rapidly by a rough cart-track that led ultimately to the sea. On the bare sandy track he paced, between the estuary of the Loun and a ridge of rock a mile to the east, his eyes bent upon the sand, his mind intent upon the idea that was growing within him.

He hardly noticed his surroundings, so deeply was he wrapt up in his own thoughts: the pink clean sands, stretching for perhaps a quarter of a mile —for the tide was low—to meet the blue calm sea with its little white frill; the lighter blue of the sky overhead, patched here and there with small white clouds; the hard black isle of Meath, with the rushing tide between it and the sands. McNeil was too intent upon his problem to notice any of these things.

Perhaps two hours he paced the beach, and when at last he turned inland, his face was the face of a man who sees his way clearly before him.

He returned quickly to the village, and there, in the small general store, he made some curious purchases, ranging from paraffin candles to list slippers, and with these under his arm, wrapped in a sheet of the 'Haddingtonshire Courier,' he made his way to the Rintoul Arms, where he deposited his purchases in his kit-bag.

Late dinner is not served by Mr Morrison, but a very serviceable meal known as high-tea takes its place. A dish of kippers, perhaps, or fresh herrings, followed by boiled eggs, with a running commentary of soda scones, girdle scones, dropped scones, wheatmeal scones, oat-cakes, and possibly treacle scones or potato scones, if the guidwife has had the time to bake them all. And to McNeil the laden table had the further advantage that it brought back memories of his childhood. It was years since he had feasted upon these old-fashioned dainties.

He had still some time at his disposal after the meal was over before he set out upon the expedition he had planned for himself. That could not take place safely until dusk. Filling his pipe, he sauntered into the bar parlour, and came face to face with Rab Wilson, who greeted him with a genial grin.

"Hullo, Rab," said Neil, seating himself by the side of his boyhood friend. "So you and I are, technically speaking, foes for the time being."

They had the little alcove to themselves, so could speak freely.

"I suppose ye're richt," agreed Rab, but with no show of malice. "I'll ha'e tae mind what I say, or ye'll be pumpin' a' Miss Jean's secrets oot o' me."

"So far it's been the other way round," admitted Neil with a rueful smile. "You had the advantage of me twice."

Rab laughed.

"Aye," he said. "An' muckle guid it did me. Here

we sit, baith oot in the cauld, an' that auld red-heided ruffian, Rufus, has the lauch on us a'. Hoo did he get in, Neil, for shair as death Ronald didna help him? Auld Aitken's honest, if he is an elder i' the Kirk. If we kent that we micht get the better o' Rufus yet; but I clean forgot, if ye kent ye wudna tell me."

"You're right, Rab. I certainly wouldn't, any more than you would tell me. Is Miss Rintoul much disappointed at her failure?"

"Weel, she doesna run aboot kiltin' up her coats an' pu'in' daggers oot o' her garter like some folks we ken o', but I wudna juist say she was pleased the way things ha'e turned oot. What aboot your leddy? Man, she's a sonsy bit lass thon, though Guid kens I wudna be her man for a' the siller in' the Bank o' England. It wud be payin' ower muckle for a preevilege."

"Naturally she takes her defeat hard," admitted McNeil.

"But hasna gi'en it up, or you wadna be here the noo," said Rab shrewdly.

McNeil began to feel himself on dangerous ground. He realised that in the past he had not shone in diplomacy. Rufus Rintoul had had the better of all their encounters, and Rab Wilson had learnt from him what he should not have given away. He was determined that this time he would not be led into statements that might give the faintest clue to his intentions.

"You must remember, Rab," he said, "that I have a kindness for the old inn. I was half brought up here, and now that I'm in the neighbourhood I mean to stop for a bit."

"Wi' a twa-seater hired caur," added Rab sceptically. "Ready tae scoot off tae Embro wi' the latest news at ony moment. Man, ye canna catch an auld bird like me wi' chaff."

McNeil laughed.

"Well, we'll leave it at that, and you just believe what you like, Rab. Good night. I daresay we'll run into one another again before long."

McNeil went off to his room to prepare for his expedition. The sun had gone down, and he wanted a little light to help him on his way, though not enough to make him conspicuous.

Shortly after, he left the inn and wandered carelessly across the village green, and down the road by the wall of Dorning Castle. Then, making sure that he was unobserved, he slipped into the wood through which he had led Bubbly, and shortly afterwards clambered successfully over the wall and into the castle grounds. He felt reasonably sure that the gardener would have gone home by this time, but he advanced towards the ruin cautiously, taking advantage of shrubs and hedges to conceal his movements.

CHAPTER XV.

The memory called up at sight of Jean Rintoul's pretty face dated back quite twenty years. Neil was at that time a boy of ten, not very strong except in his imagination, and his parents took every opportunity of sending him from the sooty city of Glasgow to the clear strong air of the Firth of Forth. Here he spent much time with his grandparents at the Rintoul Arms in Dorning —time which might have hung heavily upon his hands had he not been a boy of dreamy disposition, content to find his amusement in his imagination.

His favourite occupation in those far-off days was day-dreaming amongst the grass-grown ruins of Dorning Castle. On the day so unexpectedly called back to his memory he lay on the grassy slope of the courtyard, his hands behind his head, while in spirit he held Dorning Castle against a horde of tenacious foemen, or alternatively, bore down its defences and rescued from its dungeons some nebulous but undoubtedly high-flown lady.

Suddenly he was recalled to earth by a high childish voice addressing him in a domineering tone.

"What are you doing here, boy? Don't you know this is my castle?"

It took him an appreciable moment to adjust his vision from the abstract to the concrete. When he had done so he found a little girl looking down on him as he lay upon the soft turf. She had large brown eyes that rested upon him solemnly, and her face was tanned to a dusky hue by the sun. She was dressed more richly than were the children whom he was accustomed to meet with in Dorning, for her short frock was of embroidered silk, and her stockings — of which there seemed to be an abnormal extent—of the same material.

As he looked at her—doubtless with the dazed and stupid expression of one rousing from a dream—she repeated her question sharply.

"What are you doing in my castle, boy?"

"It's not your castle. It's mine," retorted Neil angrily, jealous of his imaginary rights.

"That's a lie," replied the lady, with commendable candour. "Do you know who I am?"

"I don't care who you are," replied Neil sulkily. "It's my castle, and I wish you would go away and leave me alone."

"I shall get the gardener to put you out, because I am his mistress, and Dorning Castle belongs to me."

Now Neil thought as he listened that the intruder promised to be more interesting than he had at first supposed. He assumed that she was "pretending," and saw in

prospect an engaging game of make-believe.

"All right," he cried eagerly, scrambling to his feet, and entering into the spirit of the thing as he understood it, "you can have the castle, and I'll be Robert the Bruce come to save you from the English raiders. Come on, let's go up to the battlements and look out for the enemy. They're tricky, and we must keep a good look-out."

"You are a stupid boy," said the little girl solemnly. "King Robert the Bruce was killed hundreds and hundreds of years ago, and they took out his heart and flung it to the Saracens or somebody. I learnt that in history. I don't like people who play at things out of their heads. It's so silly. I only like real games."

"I can play real games too," retorted Neil sulkily. "But I don't play with dolls."

This, scathingly.

"You are a very rude ill-mannered boy. You must have been very badly brought up," said the little girl, looking at Neil with the cold dispassionate eye of the trained observer. "I didn't ask you to play with dolls. I hate them—I like dares!"

Was there ever a boy of ten—or of twenty for that matter—who had the courage to refuse a "dare"? Neil, at least, was not prepared to risk the taunt of coward.

"Come on, then," he cried, readily enough. "You dare me first."

The little girl looked round meditatively. The two children were in an angle formed by the mossy irregular remains of two sides of the courtyard wall.

"I dare you to jump from there," she said, pointing to a break in the wall six or seven feet above where they stood.

It was nothing. The landing was soft turf. Neil accomplished it with an assumption of careless ease, almost of boredom.

It was not chivalry but the wish to hurt that made him choose in return a feat of absurd simplicity. He desired exceedingly to annoy this girl who had scorned his castles in the air, and he succeeded. She reddened under her tan, and performed the dare in a perfunctory manner that was eloquent of her disgust.

Daring is like gambling—one thing leads to another. The stakes are liable to increase the longer the game continues. So it was with these two children. They took more and more dangerous leaps, clambered to insecure ledges of the ruins, and generally behaved in a manner that would have brought a cold sweat to the brow of any spying grown-up.

They grew hot with their exertions, for it was a cloudless day in June, and the sun poured into the courtyard where they hazarded their young limbs.

"Let's go down to the dungeons," suggested Neil, when the invention of both had, for the moment, failed.

"The dungeons? Where are they?" asked the girl.

"You said it was your castle, and you don't know where the dungeons are," jeered Neil, with true boyish rudeness.

"It *is* my castle," retorted his companion, her brown eyes flashing angrily. "My uncle said I could have it."

"Anyhow," pursued Neil, "I dare you to go down into the dungeons all by yourself."

He should have known that by admitting this feat worthy to be called a dare he had given away his own fear of the place. The child was quick to note his weakness.

"If you are afraid to show me the way, I *will* go by myself," she said scornfully.

That was enough. There was nothing for it but to lead the way. Besides, the dungeons were none so bad when one had company. They—with the imagined horrors of their distant past—exercised a strange fascination over Neil, so that he had often crept down the winding broken steps, and peeped with awe into the gloomy passages and vaults, seeing vividly the manacled prisoners, their haggard bearded faces, and the hopeless look in their sunken eyes.

As the two children turned out of the sun and clambered down the uneven stair, the cold and gloom increased with every downward step. Their small feet upon the stones roused the echoes of the place, and they were afraid to speak for fear of their own voices. A dank unwholesome smell drifted up the shaft, and if one touched the walls they felt wet to the hand, so cold were they. After the scorching light of the courtyard, the place made one shiver as does a misty winter dawn.

"Where are the dungeons?" demanded the little girl, as they stood at the bottom of the winding stair.

Her voice was neither weak nor tremulous, and the more imaginative Neil gathered courage from her self-possession.

"I'll show you," he replied boldly enough, for courage is nearly as infectious as panic.

A pale grey light diffused through this underground world. It came from a series of slits high up in the wall—slits that were on a level with the courtyard above. By its aid the children could distinguish the long passage in which they stood, and the arched openings that led into the dungeons upon their right. On the left, the wall was blank.

"Take my hand and I'll show you the way," said Neil.

"You want to hold my hand because you're frightened," replied the little girl with precocious shrewdness.

"I'm *not* frightened," retorted Neil angrily. "I'm braver than you. Come and hear me shout down the well."

The words were no sooner spoken—out of bravado—than he wished them back. He had tried it once, and even as he offered to do it again he marvelled at his folly, for the awe-

some noise of his own voice thrown back at him from the well, and echoed and re-echoed from wall to vaulted roof, had driven him terror-stricken to the wholesome air above.

"Show me, then," said the girl, quite unimpressed.

They were growing accustomed to the dim light, and could now distinguish one another's faces. Neil turned his away, that the sharp eyes of his companion might not read the fear that was written there.

"Come on," he cried, and led the way down the passage.

The dungeons were all much alike, except in matter of size, for where it would appear that one unfortunate captive could pace ten yards without encountering a wall, another had barely room to stretch himself. About half-way down the passage an arched doorway led into the chamber that Neil sought. High in the wall a thin trickle of light oozed in through a slit in the masonry. A rough rectangle of dilapidated fencing occupied the middle of the floor, and a velvet-black circle within this square indicated the mouth of the well.

On the principle of getting an unpleasant job over as quickly as possible, Neil leant over the shaky rail and uttered a tremulous "Hullo," shutting his eyes tightly in anticipation of Heaven knows what.

"Hullo!" echoed the shaft in a muffled voice.

"Hullo! Hullo! Hullo!" The walls and vaulted roof re-echoed his cry in a weird fashion that sent a shiver down his young spine. He clung to the rail as to something firm and reliable amongst all this eldrich howling.

His companion was not impressed. She was younger than he, and her fears were yet undeveloped.

"Isn't it awful?" whispered the boy, not daring to raise his voice lest he should call into play once more these forces beyond his understanding.

"Ha, ha!" screamed his unsympathetic companion, jumping up and down and clapping her hands impishly. "You're frightened to death!"

"I'm not frightened," lied Neil unconvincingly. "I'm just pretending."

"That's a lie," replied the little girl. "Now it's my turn to shout. I'll show you."

Leaning over the rail, she gave voice to the most piercing and blood-curdling yell that her thin high-pitched voice was capable of. In anticipation of the awful response, Neil clung to his support, leaning forward so that his whole weight rested upon the rickety woodwork.

There was a cracking of rotted timber, a scream of terror from the boy, and in a moment he had disappeared within the yawning black mouth of the well.

For the first time the little girl showed signs of perturbation.

"Oh!" she cried in alarm. "Come back — come back,

quick. I'm all alone, and I'm frightened."

With the self-centredness of a child she thought not of the boy and his terrible fall, except in so far as he affected her own wellbeing. Her cries echoed through the vault fearsomely, and terrified her at last into silence. Then from the black unknown there came up to her a shrill whimpering. The boy was alive.

He fell, as it seemed to him, for an age, and the thud with which the fall ended jarred every least part of his young body—yet not so much, surely, as such a fall should have done had he landed upon the hard ground. As his scattered wits gathered, he realised that he lay, crumpled up, upon something soft—something that gave to the touch. He was terribly frightened and unstrung, and it was then that his whimpering cries filtered upward to the other child on the brink.

"Boy, boy," he heard her cry, "come back quick. I'm frightened."

He moved gradually and found that he was unhurt; but the darkness about him was like pitch, and the place smelt mouldy. He seemed to be lying upon sacks of straw, judging by the feel. Then he recollected a surreptitiously acquired box of matches in his pocket, and he sat up, wonderfully relieved at the mere thought of light.

The first match showed him little, for it burnt out before he had become accustomed to the glare; but in rapid succession he struck several others, and by their light discovered the circumstances in which he lay. It was no well, apparently, into which he had fallen, for there was no sign of water or even of damp. Before him there seemed to be something in the nature of a tunnel—at least, there was one part where no masonry showed, but merely a velvety blackness impervious to his feeble flame.

He took little notice of that, however, for the one idea in his young mind was to get back to the surface, and in that direction also he made a discovery. Before him, hanging from the shaft, was a rusty chain, and heavy iron bolts protruded from the wall at more or less regular intervals. By this time he had risen to his feet, and the illumination of his matches had given him more confidence.

Indeed, in the face of actual danger his fears were not nearly so great as when they were merely the children of his own imagination. He had now something other to think of, and he had no time to conjure up vague possibilities.

A further inspection convinced him that the chain and the bolts in the wall would afford him a means of getting back to the spot from which he had fallen.

"Are you there?" he called softly, still fearful of his own voice in the resounding space.

The whimpering now came from the other end of the shaft.

"Yes," he heard a tremulous voice cry weakly. "But I'm so frightened."

"I'm coming up. It's all right," he called more boldly.

He hung his weight to the chain to test its strength, then, satisfied that he could trust himself to it, began the upward climb. He was again in pitch darkness, for he was unable to use his matches, both hands being fully occupied, one clinging to the chain for support, the other fumbling in the darkness above for the bolts by which he climbed. Gradually he came within range of the dim half-light above, and his confidence grew, and at last, after what seemed hours of struggle, he reached the solid ground above.

He pitched full length upon the uneven surface, and burst into an uncontrollable spasm of dry sobs, careless of the child by his side.

"Oh don't, don't!" she cried hysterically. "I'm so frightened. I want to go home."

Gradually Neil regained control over himself. He sat up, at first silently, an occasional sob shaking his whole body, and finally rose to his feet shakily.

"You won't tell?" were the first words he spoke.

"Oh no, no! Come away. I want to go home."

"I'd get such a licking if my grandfather knew, and they wouldn't let me come back to the castle."

"I'll never tell. I promise. As sure as death. But do come away," said the girl earnestly.

"Come on, then."

Hand in hand they hurried from the vault, and clattered up the winding stair into the wholesome sunlight.

"Oh, you do look funny," said the girl, quickly recovering herself as the scene of her terrors receded.

Children are as resilient as rubber.

Neil glanced down and found his clothing streaked with rust and dirt. He could not see his face, which was paper-white, and had the startled air of a madman. With his cap he knocked the worst of the stains from his clothes and boots, with a child's easy satisfaction in a rough-and-ready cleanliness.

"And you'll never tell?" he asked again anxiously.

"I promised," said the girl, "and I wouldn't tell a lie. I'm going home now. I won't ever play with you again, because I don't like you a bit."

"I'm very glad of that, anyway," retorted Neil. "I wouldn't have fallen down the well if it hadn't been for you."

"That's a lie, but I don't care. I won't ever speak to you again even if I see you—and I hope I never do."

With this parting thrust she left Neil to himself, and, as a child, he never did see her again.

The whole adventure faded from his conscious memory,

yet it was not entirely lost, and only required the proper environment to bring it to the forefront of his mind in all its detail.

In Jean Rintoul he recognised the little girl of the "dares," and there rushed before his eyes the scene at the bottom of the shaft,—himself, with flaring match held on high, and before him the deep velvety blackness that veiled —something.

How did Rufus Rintoul get into Dorning House? Was it possible that there was an underground passage from the old castle to the comparatively modern house?

This was what he had come out to discover.

CHAPTER XVI.

Detail was almost indistinguishable in the gathering night as Neil McNeil paused in the courtyard of Dorning Castle to recover his breath for the next stage of the adventure. He felt none of the tremors of twenty years ago, for, as frequently happens, the sensitive and imaginative child had grown into a man of firm nerves and strong will. His determination to bring this thing off if it were at all possible was hardened by the consciousness of past failure. He had a reckoning to settle with Rufus Rintoul, and it would be no fault of his if he failed to even it.

By the guarded beam of an electric torch he made his way downward into the vaults to the mouth of the well down which he had called so diffidently twenty years before. The fencing, he noticed, had been renewed. He had come prepared to find that the chain by which he had supported his ascent had rusted away, but a beam of light thrown down the shaft showed that it was, at least, still in position. McNeil did not intend, however, to take any chance of a second fall. He unwound from his waist the rope with which he had come provided, secured it to an upright post in the fencing, and then let himself slip gradually down into the shaft. The descent was easy. He hardly required the assistance of the bolts let into the wall, but made use of them as a test for his return.

Quickly he found himself at the bottom, and eagerly flashed his torch round the confined space. Yes! His memory had not led him astray. A tunnel yawned before him, straight and narrow so far as the beam of light revealed it. At his feet lay some decayed sacking and the remains of a heap of straw—the same, no doubt, on which he had fallen twenty years before.

McNeil intended to conduct his exploration methodically. He took from his pocket a candle—one of a number,—

and having lit it, stuck it by its own grease upon a projecting stone at the entrance to the tunnel. Then from another pocket he produced a ball of twine, one end of which he unrolled and tied to a loose stone which lay upon the ground. He was now prepared to advance, with reasonable assurance of finding his way back. Throwing a beam of light before him, he set out down the tunnel, the string unwinding as he walked. There was no difficulty. The tunnel was low-roofed in places, so that he had to stoop in order to pass, but he came to no bifurcations of his path. Several times he came to a bend in the tunnel, and at each such corner he left a lighted candle burning behind him.

The farther he went, the more assured he felt that he was on the right track. Surely the passage could lead nowhere but to Dorning House! When at last he found his path begin to slope upward steeply, he felt that he must be nearing his destination, and as a precautionary measure he stopped and changed his shoes for the list slippers he had provided himself with.

The tunnel ended in a steep narrow flight of stone steps. Silently, cautiously, McNeil mounted, obscuring his light with his hand lest it should betray him. He found himself upon a little landing, facing a blank partition thick with an accumulation of dusty cobwebs. He had reached the end of the passage.

He stood motionless, holding his breath. He was certain that the panel before him could be opened, but he did not dare to attempt to find its mechanism in case he should discover himself to some one—to Rufus Rintoul, he told himself—on the other side.

Even as he stood he heard the sound of movement through the wood, and then a voice, a voice he knew well.

"No, nothing more, Ronald. You can go. Put a lamp in the smoking-room, and the port. I shan't want you again."

It must be the dining-room of Dorning House, thought Neil, and he pictured Rufus, alone at the head of his table, cigar in hand, loitering lazily over the tail-end of the meal. His words had suggested that he would shortly make a move, and McNeil determined to stay where he was, in the hope that the dining-room would soon be unoccupied. He wanted to make absolutely certain of his ground before he carried his discovery to headquarters, and so he stood silently, scarcely daring to move even a muscle.

His patience was at last rewarded. He heard a chair pushed back and the retreating tread of a heavy man's footsteps. He waited for some time before he dared be certain that the room was empty, and then flashed his torch over the panel be-

fore him, looking intently for any sign of a spring. The cobwebs gave him the clue he sought, for while they hung thickly to the woodwork, at one spot they were broken away and hung in ragged festoons as though recently disturbed.

Applying his attention to this spot, McNeil discovered a concealed knob, and pressing it, found that the panel opened on hinges, swinging inward to the room beyond. That was all he wanted. One hurried glance round the lamp-lit, oak-panelled room, and he hastily closed the secret door, assured that he could lead the way into Dorning House whenever he desired.

Exultantly he hurried back through the tunnel, extinguishing his candles as he went. At last he was in a position to get even—more than even—with Rufus Rintoul, and to prove to his mistress that he was worthy of the trust she had placed in him.

He clambered up the shaft with little difficulty, and, clear of the castle gardens, was soon striding back towards the Rintoul Arms with a spring in his step that it had wellnigh lost these last few days.

Then, somehow, his feet began to lag, and his coming triumph lost its savour. The picture of Jean Rintoul insisted on obtruding itself upon his fancies. She was so slight and helpless, and had such a pathetically poor chance in the contest. If, now, he had been on her side, he could have—but, damn it! that was being untrue to the salt he had eaten. Francesca Marinetti had a claim to his whole energy, to his whole loyalty, yet, somehow, the thought of her did not arouse the enthusiasm in him that it ought to have done.

Ever since that ridiculous scene before Dorning House, when she had looked, and acted as, the typical heroine in melodrama, his attitude towards her had changed. Scales seemed to have fallen from his eyes, and he saw her no longer as a beautiful figure of romance, but rather as a tawdry creature of the limelight.

Was he just to his mistress, or was his outlook influenced by the memory of a slender body held firmly in his arms? If so, he was so far unconscious of the bias.

He slept that night in Dorning, and set out next morning after breakfast to carry his discovery to Edinburgh. On his arrival he found that Francesca was out shopping in Princes Street, carrying with her a bodyguard of the most fervent of her admirers—Bubbly, of course, for he and Francesca could hardly be parted, and also the two youngest of the party, Wilson and Beattie. They returned laden with parcels—for Francesca was an inveterate shopper, and could resist nothing that pleased her eye—a few minutes after his arrival.

Francesca received him graciously.

"Ah! It is Major McNeil," she cried, coming forward with outstretched hands, and looking outrageously handsome in her sable furs. "And he has brought us news. I think I must have the second sicht, so sure am I that he has brought us news."

"You are right, Signorina," replied McNeil, a feeling of remorse aroused in him for his disloyal thoughts as her beauty struck him afresh. "And, I hope, good news."

"Then let us go up to my room. Come, Honourable Owen, you must be present. I ken in my bones that it is something splendid, and you deserve to share it after all that you have done for me."

What Bubbly had done, outside of Francesca's imagination, it would be difficult to say, but he had certainly insinuated himself thoroughly into her good graces. McNeil gave him a look of no great enthusiasm, remembering his dissipated if dramatic appearance before Dorning House.

In her private sitting-room Francesca threw off her furs and turned eagerly to McNeil, with parted lips and eyes that sparkled with anticipation.

"Tell me. Has my uncle broken his neck? That would be good news indeed."

McNeil shook his head with a slight smile.

"No, it is nothing like that," he said. "But I have discovered how he got into the house. The old butler was quite honest. He had nothing whatever to do with it."

He had a certain feeling of triumph in making this declaration, a feeling from which the very best people suffer when in the position to say "I told you so." Francesca, however, was not affected in the least. She swept the past, and with it her condemnation of Ronald Aitken, aside, with a wave of her graceful arm.

"You know how he got in? How will that help us?"

"Where he got in we can get in too. There is a secret passage, and he cannot suspect that any one knows of it but himself. We can take him unawares."

Francesca clasped her hands together ecstatically.

"Mio Dio, how delightful!" she exclaimed. "Honourable Owen, you must make a plan."

"There's no need to make any plan," said Neil bluntly. "The whole thing is cut and dried. We have only to enter by the secret passage in the middle of the night when your uncle is asleep, bundle him out and you can take possession."

"Ah! But that villain is so clever! We must make no mistake this time. Oh! If only we could kill him."

"You take life too seriously, you know, Signorina," protested Neil. "There would really be no advantage in killing him."

"Advantage? Maybe not. But oh, how I should love to kill him!"

The intensity of her expres-

sion, the small clenched hands, her very attitude confirmed the sincerity of her tone. When she had calmed down a little, McNeil related his story of the discovery of the secret passage, making no mention, however, of his meeting with Jean Rintoul. He merely explained that the old castle had awakened his childhood's memories, and brought back to his mind the day upon which he had fallen down the well.

When he had concluded, Francesca turned to Bubbly.

"What do you think, Honourable Owen? When shall we make the attack?" she demanded.

"There's no need to delay," said Neil.

He saw no reason to ask Bubbly's advice. The thing was all plain sailing, but he had the feeling that Francesca did not relish the credit going all to him.

She waved a careless hand at him.

"We must not move a step until we hear what Honourable Owen says. Did you not tell me first of his wonderful brain? He will make us a plot."

"But really, Signorina, what is the use of it?" asked Neil, his exasperation showing in his voice. "We have only to slip through the tunnel, take your uncle by surprise, and turn him out. You will be waiting at the door, and we let you in. Nothing could be simpler."

"I will be waiting at the door! Guid sakes! And you say there is no need for Honourable Owen! I will go through the secret passage, and I will help to turn that usurping villain from my house. Is it not so, Honourable Owen?"

"Assuredly, Signorina, assuredly," agreed Bubbly. "Hang it all, you must be in at the death."

"Bubbly, you are an ass," declared McNeil hotly. "Any one but a congenital idiot would see that this is no job for a lady. You've been in the castle gardens yourself, and you know how we had to scale the wall. This time we have to climb down the shaft as well. The thing is preposterous."

Owen looked distinctly uncomfortable, but Francesca would not have him browbeaten—at least, not where her own wishes were also at stake.

"You speak too fast, Major McNeil," she said, turning upon him with blazing eyes. "You have found this passage and you think to bully us, but no—it will not do. We shall act as Honourable Owen advises. Eccolo!"

"And do you really presume to advise that we drag the Signorina quite unnecessarily through all this rough work?" demanded Neil, turning suddenly on Owen.

With the eyes of his mistress upon him Bubbly replied without a qualm—

"Indubitably," but his eyes would not meet Neil's.

"Very well," said the latter shortly. "The responsibility is yours. I take it I am to

arrange the expedition for to-night, Signorina?"

"Yes, yes, we must not let that wretch have possession for one moment longer than we can help. To-night we shall have a grand dinner before we start. I will see to that. I leave you to arrange all the details with Honourable Owen. And please—please be advised by him, for he is very, *very* clever."

She took McNeil's hands in hers and pressed them—a tardy recognition of his success,—and then left the two men to themselves.

McNeil turned upon Owen sternly.

"You are a nice sort of chap, Bubbly," he said harshly. "Good Lord, haven't you got any backbone? You can see as well as I can that this isn't a job for a woman."

"My dear Neil, be not consumed by your evil passions," retorted Bubbly. "Nothing is ever gained by wrath and strife. Let dogs delight to——"

"Oh, spare me quotations from the 'Better Land.' They don't go down a bit."

"Very well. Let's look at things philosophically. Keep calm, and let your reason have a chance. What have I done that you can take exception to?"

"Done, you ass? You've encouraged this wild woman——"

"Now, there you are! 'Wild woman' is no way to describe Signorina Marinetti. She is charmingly impulsive, fascinatingly feminine if you like, but her outlook is clear and her judgment sound. Witness her appreciation of my intellect. See how shrewdly she summed me up!"

"Humph!" said McNeil scornfully. "What have you done to deserve her admiration? I saw the state you were in at Dorning House the other morning when you were supposed to be in a position of trust. Your legs would hardly hold you up. And the comic-opera way you brought her there! Lord, I was ashamed of the whole bunch! And as for advice, you don't even try to manage her."

"Neil, I am a philosopher," replied Bubbly, smiling perkily. "And also a person of considerable observation and shrewdness. You can take it from me that the Signorina does not want advice. She has no use for it. She wants acquiescence in the first place, and encouragement in the second. I supply both, hence my unassailable position in her good graces."

"I shouldn't call you a philosopher. I should call you a cynical little scoundrel," declared Neil bluntly.

"You would be wrong, Neil. What's the use of kicking against the pricks? None. She wants her own way, and she means to have her own way, so there's no use making oneself unpopular about things. You would be well advised to adopt my tactics yourself, old lad. You're none too high in

the royal favour as it is. I don't mind telling you, if you hadn't pulled this business off to-day you would have received a nasty jar."

"So that's the way the wind blows!" said McNeil gloomily. "Well, I can't help it. I'm doing my duty, and I mean to keep on doing it whether it makes me popular or not. I certainly shan't try to curry favour by pandering to every mood and fancy of the Signorina. I've taken on a job, and I'll carry it through in my own way. Which reminds me, Bubbly, there's to be no repetition to-night of the binge you must have had on the last occasion. Understand that."

"My dear boy, you exaggerate!" protested Bubbly, looking, however, just a little sheepish. "How can you talk of the Signorina and a binge in the same breath? It's getting very close to sacrilege."

"I don't care a damn, sacrilege or not. I won't have it. I heard her speaking of organising a special dinner. Well, I don't approve. It will be time enough to celebrate when we have won. You've got to see that things keep within bounds."

It was all very well for McNeil to give his instructions to Owen, but Francesca had given hers to the *chef*, and the dinner that night did honour to the hotel. Francesca's retainers were already stimulated by the hope of prospective success, and were full of high spirits before the meal began. Their mistress's orders from the wine-list were on a generous scale, and the dinner-party was voted an unqualified success—by all but Neil, who grew gloomy and more gloomy with each succeeding course.

He could not enter into the spirit of the thing. The toasts—mainly the health, beauty, and success of Francesca Marinetti—left him cold, and the wild laughter sounded to him as the crackling of thorns under a pot.

He was glad when it was all over, and he could collect the party together for the journey to Dorning. The cars were all arranged for, everything was in train, and his only fear lay in the hilarious condition of the party supposed to be under his control.

CHAPTER XVII.

Francesca met them in the hotel lounge. She was wrapped from head to foot in a long loose cloak, but McNeil was pleased to notice, from the laced brown boots that appeared beneath, that she was apparently more suitably clad for the adventure than on the previous occasion.

It was close upon eleven o'clock when the party got aboard the waiting cars, and set out on the night journey to Dorning. As before, the

cars were abandoned some way out of the village, and under the guidance of McNeil the party proceeded on foot. As they started, McNeil looked around for the cloaked figure of Francesca, but it was not to be seen. Instead, by the light of the car lamps he distinguished a graceful figure in breeches and high boots, whose proportions did not fit with his recollection of any member of his staff.

With a gesture of distaste he recognised this for another incarnation of his mistress. He disapproved of this play-acting, as he called it to himself, and, moreover, he had an old-fashioned prejudice against women usurping men's apparel.

Francesca herself was evidently delighted with her new part. She strode along by the side of Bubbly with a spring in her step, occasionally indulging in a skipping motion that almost amounted to a dance step, exulting in her emancipation from the tyranny of skirts. McNeil pushed ahead in disgust.

It was now within a few minutes of midnight, and Dorning was wrapt in slumber. The party reached the wood and that part of the castle wall that served as McNeil's means of entry to the gardens without encountering anything larger than a hedgehog.

While McNeil was telling off two of the party to the assistance of Francesca, the lady took matters into her own hands. With an agility that a cat might have envied she scaled the tree-trunk, clambered along the branch that overhung the wall, and dropped lightly upon the other side. When McNeil joined her, she smiled scornfully at him in the darkness.

"I will not be coddled like a baby," she declared petulantly. "Where a man goes a woman can go—at least, a woman like me."

It was the same when the party reached the mouth of the well. McNeil had provided himself in Edinburgh with a rope and light tackle, by means of which he intended to lower Francesca in safety to the bottom. At sight of his preparations she became furious, and in spite of the general protest, insisted upon climbing down by means of the chain and bolts. Her daring roused her admiring supporters to new heights of enthusiasm in her cause.

Soon the whole party was marshalled in the narrow tunnel, and McNeil had some difficulty in maintaining his control. From Francesca downwards they were all in the highest of high spirits, a condition not altogether dissociated from the magnums of champagne that had been emptied to the success of the expedition. Laughter and a confusion of banter passed from mouth to mouth, and for a moment it appeared as if the whole party would get out of hand.

With a few sharp words McNeil managed to regain con-

trol, and pushed his way to the head of the line.

"Follow me as quietly as possible," he ordered. "And let there be no talking. We must take Rufus asleep, and avoid trouble. Keep close on my heels, Signorina, and you, Bubbly, follow your mistress. The rest will follow in order behind."

The passage was negotiated without incident, the panel opened silently, and the whole party trooped into the long dining-room of Dorning House. Here there was a pause, for no one had the least idea in what part of the house Rufus Rintoul's bedroom lay.

There was a whispered consultation by the light of gleaming electric torches.

"We may be pretty certain that he sleeps upstairs," said McNeil, "but we'll take no chances of him getting behind us. Lindsay, you will stay on guard over the secret entrance, and we'll leave Pringle and Bailey to hold the bottom of the stair and watch the front and back doors. The rest will follow me upstairs, and let no one show a light without my permission. My torch will be all that is necessary. Perhaps, Signorina, you will stay below with Pringle and Bailey? As we hope to surprise your uncle in bed, it might be embarras——"

"You speak like a fool, Major McNeil," cried Francesca, without giving him time to finish. "*I* will not be embarrassed, and what does it matter about him? He is a wretch, and I want to see him humbled in the dust."

McNeil shrugged his shoulders, and, turning, led the way from the dining-room into the hall. The torch showed dimly its great extent, the armour and the stags' heads upon the panelled walls, and the heavy black oak beams in the ceiling. It showed also the commencement of a wide stairway towards which McNeil moved silently.

Bubbly was the first to disturb the silence. Perhaps McNeil was wrong in ordering that none but he should show a light; perhaps Bubbly was destined to stumble in any case. He certainly made plenty of noise, and some of the younger and more frivolous of those behind him could not restrain their laughter. There was a confused and muffled gurgling that was with difficulty silenced by McNeil's sibilant "Hist."

It was, however, too late.

There was the sound of an opening door, and the slapping of bare feet on a polished floor.

"Who's there?" called the harsh voice of Rufus Rintoul.

The six upon the stairs held their breath and crouched motionless. They heard a sharp metallic click, easily guessed as the cocking of a revolver.

"Who's there?" repeated Rufus. "I am armed, and won't hesitate to shoot, I warn you."

"I shouldn't do that, Mr

Rintoul," said McNeil quietly. "It wouldn't help you. You are hopelessly outnumbered; and anyhow—remember your own words—'murder disqualifies.'"

"Ah! It's you, McNeil. Well, we may as well have a light."

McNeil pressed the contact of his torch and revealed a picturesque figure occupying the stairhead. Rufus was clad in pyjamas of sea-green silk, over which he had hastily thrown a bath-gown of rich orange. He stood, with his large bare feet splayed out, a revolver in his hand resting upon his left forearm. His flaming hair was wildly tangled, and his green eyes shone like a cat's in the beam of the torch.

"The light is a trifle one-sided," he said calmly, lowering his revolver. "I'll get a candle."

As he slipped from the beam of light and disappeared, Francesca pushed past Neil upon the stair.

"Don't let him go. He will escape us!" she cried excitedly, and would have rushed after her uncle had not McNeil seized her arm and held her back.

"He can't escape," he said quietly. "And if he did, we should have gained our end."

"How dare you hold me!" cried Francesca angrily, shaking off the restraining hand. "You would ruin everything! Guid sakes, man, do you no' ken that he'll be desperate?"

"Now now, niece, restrain that impetuous disposition of yours. I don't envy you your post, McNeil, whatever the reward—and the perquisites."

Rufus had reappeared, armed this time with nothing more formidable than a candle in a long brass candlestick. He held it high, and glanced shrewdly down the stair.

"Aye, aye," he said lightly. "Quite a party, to be sure. If you'd just warned me you were coming, Ronald would have had a cold collation ready, and I would have received you in more suitable attire. Bless me, niece, you look handsomer than ever in the breeks. But come, I'm forgetting the duties of a host. We'll go down to the smoking-room, and see if the house can run to a drink round."

There was something taking in the way he accepted his defeat. With perfect self-possession he descended the stair, passed the whole party of his enemies, and, candle in hand, led the way to the smoking-room.

"I thought as much," he said steadily, with a glance to the hearth. "The embers are glowing still. Take the chair by the fire, niece, and make yourself at home. Now, where's that whisky?"

He busied himself with the task of providing for his guests, precisely as one would have expected from a host taken unawares. So calmly, indeed, did he play the part that neither McNeil nor any of his associates had for the moment a word to say.

Ronald Aitken put in an appearance—a comic interlude. The door slowly swung open, the flame of a candle appeared, followed by a skinny arm.

Then the old wizened face of the butler peered round the door, his collapsed jaws and rubber-like cheeks suggesting the figure of Punch in the show. He appeared only half awake, and pattered into the room barefoot, in a prehistoric night-shirt from whose inadequate tails his skinny calves protruded, colourless and hairy. An old-fashioned conical night-cap covered his thin hair, and the tassel dangled grotesquely by his left ear.

"Did ye speir for onything, sir?" he asked sleepily, and then became suddenly and acutely aware that many pairs of eyes were fixed upon him.

"Losh! Company! An' me in ma nicht-goon!"

The old man scurried from the room, his modest soul sinking in shame. Fortunately for his peace of mind, he had not recognised, in the breeched and booted figure by the fire, a member of the opposite sex.

"You needn't come back, Ronald. We shan't want you," Rufus called after him. Then, with a general glance round the company, "You'll all take a nip, I dare say. Niece—a glass of port?"

Francesca, during the transition from the stairs to the smoking-room, had been tingling with suppressed excitement.

"How dare you play the host in my house?" she cried out.

She stood upon the hearth-rug before the dying embers of the fire, her booted legs straddled, her graceful figure held straight and taut. The little fur toque upon her head gave her something of the air of a Russian officer.

"Having taken possession in accordance with the will of my deceased brother, I think I'm justified," retorted Rufus, an equally striking figure in his flamboyant colours and dishevelled head. "A glass of port?"

"Ay! But can you keep possession? Why do you think we have come here? Did we wake you in the middle of the night to drink with you? You ken better. For all your smooth face and soft words, you ken that you are beat. *I* am the mistress of Dorning House!"

"Good old Signorina!" cried Wilson, and a general cheer arose from Francesca's supporters.

They were all present now, Lindsay, Pringle, and Bailey having left their posts as the need for watchfulness lapsed. They were grouped about the room, a formidable and indeed overwhelming force as against one man. So Rufus Rintoul had summed them, in his shrewd glance around.

"You certainly leave little to chance, niece," he said, with a wave of his hand towards the men to indicate the fact. "I gather that you propose to evict me from the home of

my fathers, and I must admit you have the force to do it. You'll not grudge me a last minute in possession, though. It may be childish, but I would like to be the Laird for long enough to offer you all the hospitality of Dorning House. Come, we'll drink the health of the incoming tenant."

With his calm satirical smile he turned to the sideboard, and busied himself with glasses and decanters. A buzz of whispered talk passed round the room. Even Francesca's strongest partisans could not withhold a certain admiration from this man. He took his defeat so well.

"Come, niece, you must drink with us," he said, coming forward, wine-glass in hand.

The tinge of theatricality in his action appealed to Francesca. Besides, she was so certain of her triumph that she could afford to humour her uncle's whim. She took the glass, and waited until the others were served. Rufus mixed a crowded trayful of whiskies-and-sodas, and passed them round imperturbably, the slightly ironical smile never leaving his lips. Certainly he was a magnificent loser.

McNeil, meanwhile, had held himself somewhat in the background. He had a sincere respect for Rufus Rintoul's wits, a respect bred of experience. He could not rest content to believe in this smiling acquiescence in defeat, and his brain puzzled actively over the problem. With the others, however, he took his glass in hand, but kept his eyes fixed upon Rufus. It was only at the last moment that the possible solution of the mystery dawned upon him.

"Come, friends, a toast," said Rufus, holding up a brimming glass with steady hand.

His smile took a humorously rueful turn as he exclaimed loudly—

"The king is dead—long live the queen!"

"Stop!" shouted McNeil. "He has doped the drinks!"

Every glass was lowered and all eyes turned upon McNeil, and from him, automatically, to Rufus.

"My dear Major, what an accusation!" expostulated the latter, turning upon McNeil a look at once dignified and injured. "My own niece too. Do you suggest that I would——"

"Come," interrupted McNeil sternly. "The matter is easily decided. Change glasses with me, and repeat the toast. We'll all drink it after you—willingly."

As he spoke, he made the substitution, acting so quickly that Rufus had not the opportunity to protest.

"Now, the toast!" said McNeil.

Rufus stood for a moment, as though in doubt. Then a cynical smile broke over his face, and very deliberately he tossed the contents of his glass upon the carpet.

"It was worth trying," he said slowly, and with perfect self-possession. "Somewhat of

a desperate expedient, but what a feather in my cap if I'd pulled it off. Major, I hardly gave you credit for so much gumption."

There was a tinkling crash in the metal of the grate, followed by a hiss and a burst of flame, as Francesca flung her wine-glass violently from her.

"Mio Dio, what a man!" she cried, and, turning upon her uncle, she flung her words at him like missiles.

"Man? You are not a man—you are a devil! I would kill you with my own hands but for this stupid will. But maybe you are better to live—to live to see a woman triumph over you. But you are fool as well as villain, for if you had poisoned us all——"

"Poisoned? No, no, I'm not such a fool as you would make me out," protested her uncle in his unconcerned way. "You'd only have been stupefied for a few hours, and I'd have carried you out one by one, and laid you all in a row in front of the house, as nice as you like. It's a terrible pity it failed. It would have been a rare ploy!"

He shook his great red head sadly at thought of the opportunity lost.

"Meanwhile, you are wasting time," declared McNeil. "Mr Rintoul, you see that you are hopelessly outnumbered, and as your plan has failed, you may as well give in gracefully. It wouldn't be a bad idea if you put on some clothes."

"Aye, I believe you're right. If you can bear to part from me for a few minutes——"

"Some of us will keep you company," interrupted McNeil drily. "We have too much respect for your abilities to let you out of our sight. Lindsay, you and Beattie will go with Mr Rintoul. Televant, you'd better go too, and supervise. Give him any help he needs with his packing."

"I thank you for the compliment, Major," said Rufus, smiling still. "Good night, niece—or shall I see you again before I go?"

"I never wish to see you again—uncle!" retorted Francesca intensely.

"We'll discuss you while you are packing," said McNeil shortly, holding the door for Rufus.

When he had gone, Francesca turned to Neil, her face alight with gratitude, and both hands held out towards him.

"You have saved us from disaster, Major McNeil. Never can I repay you."

"I have only done my duty, Signorina," he replied simply.

Although his plan had been carried to success, and that entirely by his own efforts, McNeil did not feel the glow of whole-hearted satisfaction that should have been his. Half-acknowledged at the back of his mind was a feeling that something was not as he would have wished it. He had no longer a proper enthusiasm for the cause that he had espoused. Before his mind's eye there con-

stantly drifted—notwithstanding all his efforts to be blind to it—the picture of Jean Rintoul in her simple frock, her pretty candid face looking up at him.

Her very helplessness in this contest appealed to him vaguely. Perhaps the feeling arose from her feeble efforts to struggle in his arms that morning in the dawn. Certain it was that the sensation of holding her to him lingered in his senses with a vividness altogether disproportionate to its apparent importance. Even while he spoke with Francesca, he could not banish it from his mind.

"Now the question arises," he said, making a determined effort to keep to the present, "what are we going to do with your Uncle Rufus?"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Turn him out of my house," replied Francesca violently. "I shall glory to see him go with his tail between his legs, like Adam from the Garden of Eden. Losh, it'll be fine—will it not, Honourable Owen?"

"With you as the angel with the flaming sword!" cried Bubbly. "By Jove, it will be great!"

"What a pity I wore this costume after all," said Francesca, looking down at her booted legs ruefully, conscious that they did not harmonise with Bubbly's conception.

"Have you considered the result of turning your uncle loose?" asked McNeil, callously recalling them to the facts of the case. "He is a clever man."

"What can he do?" retorted Francesca with a careless wave of her hand. "What can he do now we are in?"

"What we did when he was in," replied Neil without hesitation. "We have to hold the house for four weeks, a long enough time for a man like him to think out a scheme to dislodge us."

"Hoots! He is powerless against us. Have I not eight heroes to fight for me?" replied Francesca, looking round upon her supporters with eyes sparkling with gratitude and pride.

"But there's nothing to prevent your uncle from hiring a dozen heroes to turn us out," retorted Neil. "There are plenty of them about."

"You are too fearful, Major McNeil," said Francesca, to whom this simple idea had not occurred. "But what is it that you suggest?" she added, impressed against her will.

"If we could keep him under control—hold him a prisoner somehow—he could not get into mischief."

"Lock him up in a cellar or an attic," suggested Wilson.

McNeil shook his head.

"We can't keep him in the house," he said.

"Why not?" demanded

Francesca. "It would be fine. We could taunt him daily with his defeat!"

"Even for the sake of that exquisite and Christian experience, we dare not risk it," said Neil. "He was in the house first, and if we let him stop here for four weeks it will be he who will have fulfilled the terms of the will."

"How ridiculous, if he is a prisoner!" exclaimed Francesca. "I am the mistress of the house."

"It may be so," said Neil doubtfully. "But it is too big a risk to take. We are not the umpires, and Ronald Aitken might decide against us. If we hold your uncle prisoner, it must be outside, and I have an idea that we could manage it easily enough."

"He has a scheme, Signorina," said Bubbly, turning to his mistress. "But before we hear it, what about having that drink that we were swindled out of? I think it's indicated?"

"Hear, hear," two or three confirmatory voices supported him.

Bubbly went to the sideboard, where there was still a stock of empty glasses, and with skilled hands rapidly mixed a round of drinks.

"Now then, Neil, cough up your plan," he said, when he had attended to the wants of every one, including Francesca, who did not disdain a stiff glass of port.

"We can't keep him here," said Neil, "for the reason I have given. But what about Meath, the island off the coast? We could ferry him across and leave him there. There used to be a disused fisherman's hut on the island. Probably it is there still. Nobody goes near the place, so he would be quite safe."

"He might swim across," suggested Owen.

"Impossible," replied Neil. "The current between the island and the coast would beat the strongest swimmer. He could only escape by boat, and no boats have any reason to go anywhere near Meath. We could row across every day to make sure that he was safe."

"Major McNeil, you have again found the way. I drink to you," said Francesca, rising and holding out her glass towards the discoverer of the plan. "We shall do it."

"'Marooned on Meath, or the Repentance of Rufus Rintoul,'" murmured Bubbly, upon whom his latest drink appeared to have taken rapid effect. "What a scenario for the films! Or better, a moral tale—'Rufus Rintoul's Repentance, a Simple Sermon for Silly Souls.' I could write that up for the 'Better Land,' and gladden the heart of Maggie Lingford. Which reminds me——"

"This is a serious matter, Owen," interrupted McNeil harshly. "The Signorina's fortune depends on it. Shut up. Signorina, we shall take your uncle across as soon as dawn

breaks, and he will be perfectly safe—and helpless."

"It shall be as you say, Major McNeil," agreed Francesca graciously. "All that you have done——"

Heavy footsteps on the stair interrupted her, and a moment later her uncle, fully dressed, made his appearance in the doorway, and dumped down a heavy leather portmanteau.

"Well, niece," he began in his usual self-possessed manner, "I suppose I shall have to knuckle under and clear out. I'm beat—for the moment."

He wore the somewhat loudly checked knicker suit in which McNeil had first seen him, and looked, even in his defeat, a formidable foe.

"You are beaten—to the ground," agreed his niece, a rich exultation in her voice. "But you do not leave us as you say. We have other plans for you."

Rufus Rintoul's eyes narrowed a fraction. Here was something that he had not anticipated.

"Yes?" he said tentatively.

McNeil hastened to interrupt the possible disclosures of his mistress.

"You will remain under guard until dawn, Mr Rintoul," he said sharply. "We shall then reconsider the position."

"As you will, lad. I'm not in a position to make terms, so I must throw myself on your mercy—and hospitality."

He looked meaningly as he spoke at the partially filled glasses, and Bubbly rose to the occasion, crossing to the sideboard and returning shortly with a whisky-and-soda.

"I thank you," said Rufus as he took it in his hand. "After the strenuous doings of the night, on which I congratulate you all, it's more than welcome. But oh, if you had only had that drink with me!"

He shook his head sadly, then raising the glass, tipped its contents down his throat without a pause.

The high cackle of the Honourable Thomas Owen's laughter broke upon the room sharply.

"He's drunk it!" he cried excitedly. "He's drunk his own dope. He's hoist with his own petard."

Rufus stared with starting green eyes, a look of fury on his face.

"Curse you—it's a lie!" he cried harshly, though his very tone told that he believed.

"What do you mean, Bubbly? What have you done?" demanded McNeil.

"I poured a fresh drink, right enough," chuckled Owen. "Then I saw my own doped one where I had placed it on one side, so I changed them."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Francesca, clapping her hands together with the enthusiasm of a child. "Oh, Honourable Owen, what should we have done without you!"

"I'll wring your miserable chicken's neck for it, curse you."

Even as Rufus started forward to carry out his threat, he swayed upon his feet. An unnatural dazed expression appeared in his green eyes, and he threw a hand out awkwardly as if for support. Quickly McNeil pushed a chair behind him and drew him backward, so that he fell into it with an inarticulate cry. His lids dropped, and his fiery head fell forward so that the bearded chin rested on the breast.

"But for you, Honourable Owen, all of us would have been so. Mio Dio! what a wretch!"

McNeil looked up sharply, with a frown at the injustice, but thought it not worth a reference.

"I don't see any particular advantage in drugging the man," he said sourly. "You ought to be made to carry him to the beach yourself, Bubbly. He's no light weight, either. It was a fool's trick. However, it's done, and there's an end to it."

"Major McNeil, you are unjust, after all that Honourable Owen has done for us," exclaimed Francesca, rising and drawing herself to her full height, and resting her hand on Bubbly's shoulder with the air of a protector. "I ken fine what it is—it's just jealousy. Eccolo!"

"Signorina Marinetti, it is you who are unjust," retorted McNeil hotly. Then, realising how undignified it would be to point to all that he had done, he shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"Well, boys, we'll have to hump our friend here to the beach somehow," he said. "Perhaps we can find a wheelbarrow about the garden. It will soon be light enough to make a move."

"How about a boat?" asked Televant, the one-eyed man.

"There's a landing-stage in the estuary of the Loun, and we are pretty sure to find a boat belonging to the house. There was always one in my young days," said McNeil.

Dawn was already breaking, and soon after the limp body of Rufus was carried out and placed upon a structure such as gardeners use to carry pots. It served as a rude stretcher, and on it the body was borne by a rough path to the sea. McNeil found the boat tied to the landing-stage, and the oars in a small shelter behind.

"Lindsay, Televant, and myself will be sufficient," said Neil. "We needn't load up the boat."

As the boat slipped silently into the open Firth those who were left ashore stood looking after her. In the dim grey light of dawn she presented a strange spectacle. Rufus Rintoul had been placed in the bow, and with his great fiery head lying back upon the gunwale, he looked like some Viking slain in battle, whose body was being borne homeward by his companions.

The morning was cloudy, and a chill breeze blew between the mainland and the island, beating sharply on Rintoul's bare head. They were little more than half-way across the narrow channel when he began to show feeble signs of life.

McNeil watched him closely while Televant and Lindsay rowed, but it was not until the keel grated upon the pebbly beach of Meath that Rufus really began to awake to consciousness.

"Quick! Get him ashore before he has sense to know where he is," said Neil in a low voice. "It will save a fight."

Televant sprang over the side and pulled the boat above the verge of the sea. As they lifted Rufus over the gunwale, he groaned heavily and his eyes slowly opened.

"Where am I?" he asked huskily.

"You're alive, my lad, and it's more than you deserve to be," replied Televant pleasantly.

Meath is rocky and irregular in formation, rising from a patch of level beach in rugged cliffs the best part of a hundred feet. Here and there a ledge has provided sufficient lodgment for a shallow deposit of soil, where coarse grass and bents, and even a few stunted shrubs, find sustenance.

"The hut I spoke of lay to the left," said McNeil, panting under his share of the heavy body.

Luckily the distance was not great, not only on account of the burden, but because Rufus each moment grew more clearly conscious, and began to show signs of opposition.

The hut was still in existence, and was in a fair state of preservation. It belonged to the Rintoul estate, and had been kept up by the late Laird as a convenience for fishing excursions.

"There you are, my lad—and glad to be quit of you," exclaimed Televant, as they laid their burden down on a grassy patch before the hut.

Rufus sat up and gazed around him with growing intelligence. Then he turned his eyes upon his three kidnappers.

"I see," he said, nodding his head slowly several times. "You mean to maroon me. Damn it, how did you—ah, of course! The doped drink. I remember. Well, gentlemen, the responsibility is yours. If I die from exposure—and let me tell you my lungs are exceedingly susceptible—it will be murder."

He chuckled at the thought.

"It would be almost worth it for the sake of doing that hussy of a niece of mine out of the inheritance."

"We'll take care that you don't die, Mr Rintoul," said McNeil grimly. "Even if we have to get a doctor and a couple of nurses to look after you."

Rufus glanced shrewdly from face to face, and his meaning was obvious in his expression.

McNeil read it.

"No, it's hopeless," he said bluntly. "You can't master the three of us, especially in your present weak state. As to the future, I shall return later in the day and bring you blankets, food, and anything in reason that you care to ask for—books, for instance. Your portmanteau we have brought with us. We don't want your imprisonment to be any more irksome than is necessary. But we shall take no chances. When you see the boat coming, you will show yourself outside of the hut, but you will not approach the water's edge. Food will be left for you daily, and I shall make a point of asking you each day what you require for your comfort. If you do not observe the rules, if you make any attempt to leave the hut and approach the boat, I shall simply row off and return next day. You quite understand?"

Rufus listened throughout without a sign of any feeling. At the end he nodded slightly.

"You're in a position to make the terms," he said calmly. "I'll keep to them until I see my chance, and then God help you. There's more in you, Major, than I thought at our early meetings. I admit I made a mistake. I underestimated you. Well, well—at least I'll have time and quiet to think out here, and the air is good."

"We'll leave him," said Neil to his companions. "Good morning, Mr Rintoul."

"Good morning, Major, and I just wish you had my head. Drugs are the very devil. I suppose you'd rather I didn't see you to the boat?"

"Keep to the hut. You have no chance in any case."

Rufus watched the boat depart from the island intently, his face hard as a mask of granite. Then, after a long spell of rigid thought with brows drawn down, he shrugged his shoulders and turned to the hut.

"They think to keep me here a month!" he said aloud, contempt in his voice.

(To be continued.)

THE TYRANNY OF OBJECTS.

In a life of wandering I early discovered that one's happiness depends a great deal on the paucity of one's possessions. The bachelor's rule should be never to possess anything that he cannot squeeze into a yakdan. Half the sufferings of the Anglo-Indian memsahib arise from her inability to fall in with this philosophy. Minerva, in her life of migrations, is always leaving things behind — furniture, children, china, dogs, knife-boards, meat-safes, hats, and all the superfluity of objects that refuse to submit to the confinement of packing-cases, or to being sewn up like mummies in bales.

"Boj" is the expressive Indian word for luggage. A very good word, with its sound of dead inanimate weight, and its suggestion of incubus, a malevolent vitalised incubus. "Boj" would be a good name for a popular Hindu god—a god to be appeased. And it might be included in the Anglo-Indian pantheon, as it weighs no less heavily on the spirits of sahibs than on the backs of coolies.

It was in a novel of Bourget's, I think, that I came across the delightful old Frenchman who was "affranchi de la tyrannie des objets." I have felt a spiritual kinship with him ever since. Not that I lay any claim to asceticism. Give me a pipe or a bottle of wine, or, better still, a tin of smuggled tobacco, and I am your humble servant; but I must confess I am apt to judge the ordinary gift by its girth. I know that my feigned satisfaction on the receipt of presents is the most miserable piece of acting. I can't even write a plausible letter of thanks. A new object means something else to pack. It is, or it ought to be, impossible to leave presents behind. And that is why, I am afraid, I have learnt to look Minerva's gift-horses in the mouth with base suspicions, discovering in them some ulterior household use.

Minerva has never understood my enfranchisement. In the matter of ornaments or furniture or clothes I pride myself that my instinct for the elimination of superfluities amounts to something like genius in the squaring of comfort with the economies and freedom of life. But Minerva has always resolutely refused "to pig it." I tell her that she cannot look into a shop window without seeing an object that is "sure to come in useful some time." This she denies. Her purchases are contingent economies, she argues. Chintzes, embroideries, cretonnes, carpets, curtains, mats, silk, crockery, china, old brass accumulate; and I have noticed that on the eve of departure from anywhere, her hat-boxes, suit-cases, dressing-case, valise,

trunks are always inadequate. I have become an adept at sitting on lids, adjusting straps, humouring refractory locks, and generally reducing bulk by what Dr Johnson would have called "fundamental physical pressure," though I am afraid that in my case it is too often the triumph of matter over mind.

But to be perfectly fair to Minerva, she has conceived certain ingenious economies—in space, that is to say. And to the Anglo-Indian memsahib economy in space is the greatest economy, as it includes all others—economy in effort, tissue, temper, and ultimately in expense. Minerva it was who devised the method of packing our boots—one of hers in one of mine. And there was the purchase of those small lace-mats for the table from the Chinaman in the bazar. They go under glasses and plates, and a big one in the centre under the flowers, instead of a cloth. It is an extraordinarily dainty arrangement. Of course it meant a new polished oak table, which became a too essential part of our household furniture to leave behind; but it was a sacrifice to the Graces; and a more important point was that one could get all one's table-linen into the drawer of a small writing-desk, and the dhobie's casualty list dwindled.

Minerva's taste is infallible. The natural defect of this virtue, of course, is that her attachment to objects is aggravated. She has an eye for old brass. The merchants from Kabul and Yarkand have never imposed upon her. If she kept an "antiqua" shop and made a business of buying and selling she might amass a fortune. Only she could never be induced to sell.

The same week she bought a large jail-carpet, a Benares brass table, and a carved walnut Srinagar sideboard. The carpet was an extremely good bargain, I admit, and very handsome, a deep rich wine colour with the Swastika mark in black all along the edges. But we hadn't a room big enough to put it in, and it would have been a crime to have cut it up. Besides, as Minerva reminded me, we were hourly expecting a move.

One would have thought that in India womenkind would learn to dread the shadow of Boj, but experience never seems to daunt them. I recall one of our earliest migrations. It was in the hot weather, and we had packed up most of our belongings. Transport was simple. Bullock-carts from house to house, and the whole distance less than a hundred miles. I remember the creak of the bullock-cart receding down the drive like the dirge of a drunken violin, the treble in the orchestra, of which the bass was the moan of the Persian wheel. If all had gone well, or ill perhaps I should say, we were to have unpacked on the evening of the following Sunday at a particularly poisonous firepit, which we will call Agni Hotrodu, where Minerva

insisted on spending the first weeks of the hot weather with me. That night I got a joyous telegram—orders of the kind were accounted joyous in those pre-bellum days,—and the next morning I was on my way to the frontier. Minerva went to Simla, and then, as the tribesmen proved characteristically unaccommodating, home, where I joined her afterwards on furlough. We did not unpack that boj for nearly two and a half years.

Often on the frontier when we were reduced to a 20-lb. kit, I was glad of the philosophy that liberated me from the tyranny of objects. Very rarely did the parcel post reach our advance camp, and the General Commanding and the *drabi* smoked the same brand of bazar cigarettes. "Tau," I heard one day, "there is a parcel for you—a large parcel. If there is any 'baccy in it, don't forget——" I strode to the post-office babu's tent, full of generous resolutions, and carried off a bulky package to the mess. My friend sat down beside me with his empty pouch as I broke the string, tore off the paper and cardboard, and unfolded—Minerva's riding-boots.

Minerva's riding-boots! I can imagine a malevolent wrinkle on the stony features of the grim god Boj. The new pair had been forwarded to me by our blundering agents in Bombay; the old pair which they replaced were the first objects that we unearthed from the first packing-case we opened after we returned to India. A quiet interjection from Minerva prepared me for the worst. Minerva's wonderful composure and restraint are pitched to occasion. Her tranquillity is greatest in a crisis. "It's wet," I heard; "it's sticky . . . ants . . . do come."

I stood by her side over the packing-case and looked in. A large jar of liquid ginger had burst and spilt its contents into her riding-boots. These were being consumed. I saw one palpably move. Underneath were the remains of what had once been a cheddar, the hard and shelly ramparts of a castle besieged from within. Remember that Minerva had packed for a week only, and it was lucky she had put in nothing more perishable than the cheese. The wreck of the jar was evidently recent. Boj had kept this up his sleeve until the last, probably administering a jolt to the truck in a siding a day or two before it reached us. The partial decomposition of objects that had become the arena and were still being overrun by the warring pensioners of Boj was the proof. The sticky stream had descended into the interstices of the packing-case. I remember a lamp-shade; a tea-cosy; the cover of a chesterfield; a clock; books and pictures; the Roman nose invidiously singled out for elision from the portrait of Minerva's aunt; Minerva's Browning—the poet had a theme here for a new Sibrandus; my De Quincey, gilt-edged, vellum, twenty-two

volumes, a college prize. The "silver-fish" had had their innings first. Generations had banqueted here of whom the pampered offspring fell intoxicated as one shook the leaves of the volumes, or from the crevices between the picture and the warped frame, drunken yet clumsily agile, like real fish transferred from their element to air.

And so it was with all the objects that Minerva had collected to mitigate barbarism and civilise our Ishmaelitish existence at Agni Hotrodu. The only bit of luck we had was that the ginger-jar had held together until after the Trojan garrison that emerged from the cheese had concluded their epic encounters, devouring each other and what else there was to devour.

One could imagine the advance of these myrmidons to glut their obscene appetite in the stream of golden lava, into which they would fall engulfed, the prey of succeeding hosts in their turn engulfed. But the picture is too horrid to pursue. Horrid enough, one would think, to unseat the tyrant who resides in the idols of the shrine at which Minerva worships. Great constancy is presumed in the votary to whom after many such shocks the sovereignty of objects remains undeposed.

My own profane sensations in the moment of catastrophe are of small account. I was literally outside the temple. All I remember is being filled with admiration at the fortitude of Minerva standing tearless amidst her fallen, stained, ravaged, and broken gods. I wished she could have been less Spartan. Consolation would have been an impertinence, and I was silent, knowing that it is Minerva's way to be as quiet as a nun when she is feeling anything but benedictory inside.

I was put to salvage-work. A great deal might yet be saved.

When the cases were all unpacked and I reviewed the objects scattered on the floor and ranged against the wall like things dug up from the strata of past incarnations, strange, or dimly familiar, or altogether forgotten, I knew that, if only I could have comforted Minerva, I would not have greatly cared if the whole dump had been destroyed.

My philosophy of unattachment was vindicated, but I forbore to point the moral. After those early days I learnt to shed an incarnation like a slough. When loss or breakage stirred even my Laodicean profanity I thought of the dump at Agni Hotrodu, and was consoled.

II.

If any one had told us in our last migration as our boj was going to the station in a bullock-cart, that it would arrive in a bullock-cart at the destination which was to be our ultimate

bourne, we should have been either incredulous or sunk in speculative woe. If the same clairvoyant had added "after a 6000-mile sea-voyage," a weight would have been lifted from our spirits, as we were both of us consumedly tired of the East. After quoting the mileage, I need not give the reader a hundred guesses as to the habitat of the bullocks. They were of the Pyrenean breed. One knows the equipage: the yoked fawn-coloured oxen of the Pyrenees, gentle-eyed, strong, with the shaggy coiffure of sheepskin on their foreheads, the same tint as their coats, and the lean, shaven, ascetic-looking Basque walking in front with his long hazel stick held erect or sloping on his shoulders, swinging round every few yards to exhort his cattle or prod them gently on the back. Beautiful, slow, sweet-smelling indolent beasts, Minerva loved them, largely at first because they were unhumped and not of the East.

We had neither of us a thought of the Basque country when we left Bombay, but the spirit guided us there, and the physician forbade adventures farther north. The villa between the mountains and the sea was irresistible. A board in the garden directed us to the house-agent's, and notified that it was to let or sell: in five minutes, save for the signing of the *acte*, it was ours. Minerva went straight in and bought it from M. Biriatou, over the counter, so to speak, as if it had been a hat or a ham. We had been equally captivated, but as we left the agent's I was already thinking of the villa as one of Minerva's "objects," in the same category as the jail-carpet, the Turkoman rug, the carved walnut Srinagar sideboard, the Benares brass table. "Thank God," I said outside, "we won't have to pack it." Then the brilliant idea entered my head that we could use it as a receptacle: it would swallow up all our dumps; it might mean that we would never have to pack again. Little did I understand then how a mere habitation might affect one's philosophy of life.

The villa on the bleak December day on which we took over possession was very beautiful to the eye, but lacking in the essentials of comfort. We arrived in a *bourrasque*. The pine-trees were swaying and sighing in the garden; the rain beat against the windows; Minerva's coat and my overcoat were sodden. On this soaking wet day the great fireplace in the hall gave promise of cosiness. We had a fire lighted at once, but the smoke issued from the grate in suffocating volumes at an angle of forty-five, flooding the house. We sent Félicie to implore M. Biriatou to come. Rapid consultation. Whether a *rideau* was needed to keep the smoke in its proper place, or perhaps the chimney was *bouchée*, or we could put in a *salamandre*—an anthracite stove with a pipe

connecting with the chimney. But we didn't like the salamander; it was an ugly comfortless thing. At last the agent admitted there had never been a fire in the grate. Was not the house warmed by the *chauffage central*? The *cheminée* was only to look at *pour regarder* after all. It gave the house an air *plus gai*.

"The gayest thing in a house," I observed, "in winter, at any rate, is a crackling wood fire."

But no. The agent was not of my opinion. The English fashion was droll. The heat escaped up the chimney instead of warming the room.

"The Britisher," Minerva explained, meaning me, "doesn't know that he is warm until he feels the heat of the fire licking the back of his legs."

M. Biriatou departed, saying that he would send for the *fumiste* and the *ramoneur*.

"Don't," I wrote to my son at school, airing my newly-gotten French, "mix up as I did the *fumiste* and the *ramoneur*. It is as bad as confusing the *marchande de poisson* and the *poissonnière*. One goes up the chimney and comes down as black as a crow, while the other stands by the kitchen-range, possibly in a stiff white collar, and gives expert scientific advice. Not that the *fumiste* would feel insulted at being taken for the *ramoneur*. France is a much too democratic country for that."

After *déjeuner* Minerva and I discussed French and English comfort. The arm-chairs of the villa were elegant, but, like the *cheminée*, they left much to be desired.

"The French are great at essentials," I said. "Look at their bedrooms. In the humblest French house there is no scamping of the bed, the fount and focus of existence. The beds and the *armoires* are magnificent, but these easy-chairs are no more use than a sick headache. And the *cheminée*—we must get that right."

Minerva was wise in her remark about the Britisher and the moral support of fires. He may be accounted a dull phlegmatic dog by the Frenchman, and not overblessed with the gifts of imagination, but in the matter of fires or heating his nerves or senses are the conductors. I really believe I have been more conscious of warmth lying in front of a huge pine-log fire in a mountain camp just under the snow-line, with alternate sides of me roasted or frozen, as I turned them to, or away from, the blaze. On the other hand, though I have frizzled in Mesopotamia, and sampled equatorial mugginess of a dozen different degrees, I have never suffered so miserably from heat as in a Russian house in winter when they stoke up the furnace in the wall, an enormous, closed, upright cylindrical oven, and line the window-sills and the edges of the panes of glass with pink and white cotton wool. Everything in Russian character may be explained by that purgatorial hibernation.

"It's air, not cold, they are afraid of," Minerva observed. "We are lucky to have rooms without *croisées*. I am sure the Frenchman has some idea of *supplice* at the back of his mind when he talks of our *fenêtres de guillotine*. As for their heavy *croisées* opening on to the verandah, which must be open or shut, you can't let a little air in. Either the room is invaded with wind or dust or rain, or it's so stuffy you can't breathe."

Minerva believed that the air question was more prejudicial to the *entente* than Mr Lloyd George or the problem of reparations. She had heard that the sufferings of British politicians in Continental trains affected "protocols," whatever that might mean. Anyhow, she was happy in a salon without *croisées*.

Yet the beginnings of our villagiature were not encouraging. We tried the fires in the dining-room and the drawing-room: they were both *bouchés*. We tried a bedroom fireplace next: the room was soon thick with smoke. The next morning, when the *ramoneur* came to inspect, his plumb-line would not touch bottom. The chimney was *bouchée*. But it could not be soot, as M. Biriatou assured us that a fire had never been lighted in it. We got the masons to work, and with a few stunning blows they drove in a hole in the wall of the bedroom above where the obstruction was indicated. At intervals during the day we heard the work of destruction going on. By the evening they had dug out eleven pailfuls of bricks, which must have been shovelled in when the house was built twelve years earlier, and lain there ever since.

In a week we could count on a comfortable fire in every room in the house—except the hall. We decided not to disfigure or dismantle the *cheminée* with its oak supporters and inlaid tiles. We would use the hall for a lounge in summer only.

Summer arrived earlier than we expected. In the third week of February I discovered that we did not need a fire at all. Minerva was away. She had gone home to collect dumps. We had a small house in London which we had sublet for years; the lease had now expired, and Minerva was going to sell the furniture she didn't want, and bring the rest over to France. But of the practical side of the business, the ways and means, her letters were suspiciously reticent. Boj again. The little god pursued us overseas. I was too ill to help, and confess to being selfishly conscious that if I lay low and did nothing and waited for the objects to come to me instead of having "to cart them about," why, then, the whole argument against objects had vanished. My philosophy, it seems, was in process of readjustment.

It was a great empty house, and I was feeling abysmally lonely and very ill and bored in it. I could do with a few

more objects. "I don't mind roughing it on service, or when one is trekking, but——" How often had I heard that eloquent aposiopesis. Easy-chairs—there were none I could sit in. Pictures—the walls were bare. Objects may be an infernal nuisance to cart about, but thanks to Minerva, I had never lived in a house that wasn't full of them. And I had run out of English tobacco. I have always enjoyed my Caporal cigarette with my coffee, but French 'baccy in a pipe! One wants a new tongue and a new stomach for it. They say one gets acclimatised, but it must be a painful process. On Sunday I felt as doubtful inside as a fourteen-year-old boy after a surreptitious cigar at school. One has to cure oneself of the craving to smoke by smoking it. The first few days it takes three or four pipes to dispel the illusion that it must be worth while; even then when one emerges fresh from one's morning tub, one believes that a pipe of French 'baccy would be better than none at all. When one has tried it for a month one knows that it is not.

But it was books that I missed more than anything. Where were all the shelves full I had given away or sold? The day came when I was reduced to 'The Digby Diamonds,' left behind by my son, who had been over for the holidays. A detective story! "Why is one so high-browed about detective stories?" I asked myself as I laid the book down after the first chapter. "Now who on earth can have stolen those diamonds?" I began to think that I missed a lot by not reading detective stories, and had confused two things — books and games. "Why can't one take 'the bookstall novel' for what it is meant to be—a puzzle, something to put together or disentangle, to amuse or intrigue one when one is tired?" But after Chapter III. I threw the book down; I didn't care who had stolen the diamonds. Even as a jigsaw puzzle or Punch and Judy show it was bad. The "popular novelist" may bring his puppets on the stage, but he cannot make them dance. He can't contrive a twitch or a kick that might appear to proceed from themselves; in his own mechanical game the man of letters beats him every time—Buchan with his tongue in his cheek and his flair for romance, Chesterton with his exuberant fun.

Books arrived at last. The luggage that was delivered at the villa in the Pyrenean bullock-cart had been to Liverpool, and had been transhipped by cargo-boat to Bayonne. That was the first of the points that Minerva scored in this new phase of the controversy of Boj. It was I who had insisted on sending it by sea to Liverpool. Minerva had foreseen that we might want it. I believe she had foreseen the villa. In the train from Marseilles, on the racks and under the seat and overflowing into the corridor, to the embar-

rassment of our polite, forbearing, and economically-equipped fellow-travellers Minerva's boj obtruded—hat-boxes, cabin-trunks, dressing-case, valise, a large tiffin-basket, an afternoon tea-basket, odds and ends of parcels too fragile for the van. I watched the afternoon tea-basket in the rack anxiously: it contained the remnants of Minerva's Spode tea-service. There had been nine cups and saucers in the beginning, and the tragedy of these broken pieces, repeatedly mended, had been enacted in nine acts, spread over twice as many years. Nabi Baksh had been the principal villain in the piece, but there had been other agencies. As the train drew up with a violent jerk, throwing up the tea-basket on the rack like a ball from a cup, I was reminded of the subsidence of an almirah in an E.P. tent in the Himalayan rains. Almirahs ought not to reside in tents. The thing had fallen forward on its face like Dagon, with a crash that sounded like the laugh of Boj.

One of the reasons why I was *affranchi* from the tyranny to which Minerva is subject is that one never gets any good news about objects. One only gets bad news. Glass and china are broken; carpets and curtains fade and are stained; furniture is scratched and chipped. One never gets a letter to say that the china bowl of the Ming dynasty has come together again, or that gloss has returned to the Kermanshah rug, or that any precious inanimate thing is "making a good recovery," or even "doing well." Even if the broken pitcher at the cistern is mended, it is not the same thing.

The jail-carpet with the Swastika-marked edges arrived with the boj from Bayonne. The bale smelt of sea-water, and when I opened it I found the carpet disfigured with yellow stains. It must have been stowed in bilge. I would have to break this to Minerva. How often had I, who would have been glad to receive the equivalent of all my possessions in a cheque from the insurance agents, suffered vicariously through the wounds her objects had dealt her!

III.

One day when the fragrance of the Mimosa from the garden filled every room in the house, I pulled myself together and discovered that I was well enough to walk a mile. The Mimosa had been in bud a month. It was now flaming. We had accepted it when we took stock of the garden in December, though allied to the babool of Agni Hotrodu, as a sufficiently frankified tree. The villa had a fine garden of pines, a little disfigured by the vegetation which the guide-book advertises as among "the attractive features of this

coast." There ought to be a tax on palms and tamarisks in the South of France. Our instinct was to eliminate the pseudo-oriental. "There is a horrid date-palm in the garden," Minerva observed on that bleak December day when we took over possession. I looked out of the window and saw the familiar, fibrous, desiccated tree with its clusters of immature grape-coloured fruit. I decided that the date-palm must go. One might be in Basra or Mozuffargarh. I hoped there wasn't a prickly pear. Minerva pointed to a yucca under which she expected to see a cobra's head emerge. "I'd have all those bamboos down," she said. "The monkey-tree, of course, is impossible, and there is an appalling thing by the gate which looks like a castor-oil plant, much admired by M. Biriatou. I am going to dig it up and send it to him in a basket. I suppose we will have to leave the magnolias."

I left the sand for the clay, and made for a wood on the rise behind the house. No fear of a palm on this soil, the bed of celandines and cuckoo-flowers and primroses. There were violets as big as periwinkles, and periwinkles in masses like a blue inlaid tile floor under the hedges. It was the season of catkins when the sallows are covered with a downy gold dust, and the brown tassels of the alder hang soft and pliant, and the lambs-tails fleck the hedges. A season of lambs, too, and the butterflies had come out and were busy in the sallows. I need not describe the vintage of the air: an early February spring in the Pyrenees presupposes it, a wine that needs no bush. It had brought out summer flowers in profusion, the alkanet and the lesser comfrey aping the cowslip, and the tuberous bitter vetch, the mountain kind, growing so thick among the heather that a few yards off it looks like the flower of the plant; on these sun-bathed slopes it is exactly the same colour. As for the primrose carpet in the wood at the top, the clay of Norfolk or Devonshire could not vie with it. I had forgotten the way they grow on a sloping bank, that frank and homely, lavish and modest way they have of spreading themselves peculiar to the plant, like nothing exotic. "Minerva must see this," I gasped, and pictured her boj-ridden, bravely struggling with auctioneers, furniture removers, shipping agents, leaning against gusty Boreas in Kensington High Street, pelted with sleet and rain.

Minerva did see it. The very next day I found a telegram when I got back to the villa which barely preceded her, and in less than twenty-four hours I was sitting by her side on a stump in the wood, smoking English 'baccy and pointing proudly to the primroses as if I had caused them to grow.

"What is it about them that grips one so?"

"They lurk," Minerva suggested.

"No, they don't lurk. That's just it. They may fill lurking-places, but there's no ambush about them."

I knew exactly what Minerva was feeling. Coming unexpectedly on one's first bank of primroses after not having seen them for years, is like meeting a bevy of English girls when one has been buried in a zenana country—girls with faces fresh as apple-blossom, who would stare at you open-eyed if you told them that there were countries where women went about veiled.

"What is it about them that gives you that peculiar thrill? It's almost as unsettling as calf love."

"'Heralds of the flaming hours,'" Minerva suggested.

"No. There's the snowdrop and the celandine, and daisies and dandelions all the winter. No. It's more than that. It's themselves. One feels personal relations with them. They have the same appeal among flowers as the robin among birds."

"What of cowslips?"

"Yes. Cowslips perhaps and wallflowers. I suppose it must be half association. And partly spring, as you say. The sight and smell of a cowslip is the next best thing, yet you wouldn't call the cowslip a really beautiful flower if you hadn't seen one before. The wallflower is the only garden flower one thinks of in the same way. However much you rooted up primroses and wallflowers and put them into pots or window-boxes, you couldn't make them look sophisticated."

I saw a rapt meditative look in Minerva's eyes.

"Boj?" I suggested.

She smiled. "Yes, I suppose you would call it boj. I was thinking of the bowls we had. Which they would go into best. Primroses and periwinkle heads in the cloisonnée bowl on the dark oak dresser. Then in the hall——"

"Where *is* the boj?" I asked. Minerva had been oddly secretive about it since she came back.

"It's coming," she said, with an enigmatic smile.

"But how?"

"You will see. A little surprise for you."

"But when?"

"I expect it on Friday. Anyhow, it will be here in less than a week."

I was incredulous, of course. That was not the way of boj, unless Minerva—Heaven forbid!—was sending it by *grande vitesse*.

But on Friday morning after my tub I looked out of the window, and beheld the incredible. Parker's van was drawn up outside the gate, the great, brown, familiar van that rattles down Knightsbridge. I read the familiar inscription in bright-yellow letters: "Parker & Sons, Furniture Removals."

"Exactly a fortnight," said Minerva, who was standing behind me, "since I saw it off at No. 9. Not the *chassis*, of course, but the top part—the lift van, I think they call

it. House to house. I signed a declaration at the French Consulate, and it was shipped straight from the docks in London to Bayonne."

Wise, wonderful, and far-seeing Minerva. In a few hours the passages, hall, basement, dining-room, landing, bedrooms, were choked with resurrected things. One tripped up over objects everywhere. Minerva, placid and unruffled in triumph as in adversity, directed the men out of the van like a priestess at the altar of Boj. I have an impression of Félicie and Dolores with armfuls and apronfuls of books, pictures, photographs, and ornaments—objects that recalled my own and Minerva's youth awaking memories as far back as the nursery. I picked up a book that had fallen on the floor, and opened it at the first picture I remember being shown, "She peered into the robin's nest." And then I met Marie coming upstairs with the children's museum, the ostrich's egg, and the Tibetan praying-wheel, the lama's dorje—or doorkey, as the children called it,—the green lizard from Pompeii, the wooden shoe made by the lunatic at Colney Hatch. In the basement I ran into Félicie with her apron bulging with my De Quinceys—"twenty-two volumes, gilt-edged, vellum, a college prize," and upset one of them. In 'The English Mail-Coach,' stuck in the passage on the vision of sudden death, there was sediment of the lava stream, in which I found silver-fish, ants, and worse—preserved as in amber.

I began to be afraid that there were too many objects. I hate an overcrowded house. The hall, with its stuffed and corded furniture, reminded me of a warehouse in Tottenham Court Road. I remember telling Minerva I would rather live in an orderly-room than a museum. I must have been very ill to have let old Boj get his claws into me again like this, and correspondingly peevish. Before half the things were unpacked I was immobilised in bed with fever, seeing visions. In my mind's eye I saw the world as a chart, as in the old days, with dumps marked on it in wavy hummocky lines like shoals. Who was the man who first used the word "dump"? A poet *manqué* or a wag with his tongue in his cheek. A dump means things one puts down to take up again; only one doesn't take them up. The first cumulus that was called a dump, with its suggestion of heavy, piled, implacable weight, was christened by a wanderer.

In three days, when the fever left me, I found a changed house. All this time Minerva must have been doing *puja* to Boj. I stood on the *tribune*, the round gallery on the first floor, and looked down over the banisters into the hall. Minerva was standing on the bearskin by the *cheminée* arranging flowers. The *tribune* was carpeted. The five bookshelves from No. 9 lined the walls, all filled; even the

twenty-five staidly-bound volumes of 'The Monthly Packet,' an aunt's legacy, had been imported. "Furniture!" Minerva called up to me. "You will find all your own books in the salon—the ones you like." Other shelves held china. I discovered most of the oils and water-colours from No. 9. The comfortable English armchairs and chesterfield in the hall were covered with the same cretonne, the one shade for which the villa had waited. Even the clocks matched the wall-paper and wainscoting.

I watched Minerva putting daffodils into the green vase. I remembered her seeing it in the shop window at Rouen and being drawn in. We were outward bound then, after furlough, wandering across France, and she really hadn't room for another thimble in her boxes. She nursed it, in carriage and cabin, all the way to Bombay.

"How splendidly those daffodils go with the green vase!" I called down to her.

"I bought it for daffodils," she said. What faith! For all she knew, we might have been posted to Agni Hotrodu. But Minerva saw beyond. I was the opportunist, she the consistent votary. I only saw the stages; she saw the bourne. I believe she had always seen the villa. She had a bowl or a vase in the house for every kind of flower. The golden down of palm was meant to spill itself on that dark copper Najaf jar, primroses and periwinkles to float in the china bowl on the oak dresser, the red berries of butcher's broom to glow from the Saddhu's wooden begging bowl. What a gentling of things Eastern! And palm instead of palms! A world of symbolism in the transition.

I descended the carpeted stair into the hall. Minerva's economy of distribution was perfect. The villa had swallowed everything. Not a superfluity, or the superfluities were in the basement or box-room all packed away. The jail-carpet filled the dining-room as if Minerva had had the measure of it. It had actually "made a good recovery"; the bilge-water stains had disappeared.

But this is not an inventory: it is an apologia. Boj had become a smiling benevolent god. His countenance was changed. Or perhaps Minerva had worshipped at the true shrine all along, unbeknown to me, and had not been betrayed. Countries have the gods they deserve. My own theory is that Boj is a two-faced Janus god. He frowned at Agni Hotrodu, where gods exist only to scourge; but in this *paysage riant* of the Basques he and all the jolly goblins by his side, deities of the barn, the orchard, the cross-roads and the byre, smile.

But whatever manner of god he be, Minerva has laid the bogey of Boj. Objects tyrannise no more.

THE CASE OF CADWALLDR JONES.

"I SUPPOSE," my wife had said, after we had finished tea in the little grey stone hotel at Gyllgwyn, "you want to have a look at the river?"

There was a faint tinge of indulgent patronage in her tone, such as is known only to married anglers, and possibly golfers. Experience in these matters makes a man wise. I did want to look at the river, but I did not want my wife to know that I wanted to look at it—though I knew that she knew. Does that seem cryptic? If so, it is only seeming, as an Irish bull only seems ridiculous.

I went to the window while I pondered my answer. The hotel was built on a slope above the river. Looking from the window I saw the river, the stone bridge that spanned it, and something else. My wife also observed that something else.

"The bridge seems positively festooned with them!"

Literally it was. More than a score of idlers overhung the parapet. They remained there in a cluster as we looked out. They were still there half an hour later when we walked that way.

Really we went out in the first instance to shop, or to look at shops. If I was the first to see that an alley between the little stone houses led to the bridge, my wife was certainly the first to suggest our following it. At times she is merciful.

The festoons were actually loafers, some in rags and caps, some in serviceable suits and bowler hats, but all authentically loafing, an art not easily attained, or too often observed in towns.

A river bridge is always a focus for rustic communities, but they back the parapet as a rule, or dangle legs from it, their faces turned towards the roadway. Here we saw an irregular row of backs, of bent necks, and the sight was intriguing. What had they come out for to see? A trout rising, salmon running, a vagrant otter with urban instincts? I joined them, and looked over.

I looked into nothingness—that is to say, piscatorial nothingness. Below ran the droughty stream, just trickling, of terrible clearness and transparency, over stones that had already begun to gather the film of stagnation. As I pressed my chest against the unsympathetic stone of the parapet my eyes met those of Cadwalldr Jones.

Jones, as I then saw him, wore a shabby serge suit with a bowler hat. The former was frayed, the latter battered and bearing, twisted about it, a coarse gut cast with two rusty flies. He was a man of indeterminate age, between forty and fifty, I guessed. He had shrewd

grey eyes, with something abstract and unfathomable in them when he became contemplative. He wore a five-day beard; his mouth was thin, slightly crooked; he had a peaky nose; a chin of no character whatsoever.

His eyes rose from my face to my cap. They rested there on a discarded trout-fly, hooked into the tweed. His eyes gathered doubt. Was I really an angler, or only a tourist who wished to look sporting?

"Water's low?" I said.

"Indeed, yes," said Cadwalldr drily; "it is very low."

My wife called me. She wanted to know what they were looking at. I nodded to Cadwalldr, and we resumed our walk. The mystery remained unsolved. There were other mysteries about the Gyllgwyn river—mysteries of men who sat behind bushes, mysteries of men who, shading their eyes with the brims of their hats, looked longingly into pools, as if watching for the reflection of an eclipse. I came upon these mysteries later. They fascinated me right up to the moment of their solution, the sight of many men, at many different places, doing nothing so purposefully, waiting for something that I was never privileged to see arrive.

"Going to fish to-day?" my wife asked next morning at breakfast.

"Fish?" Women never learn these things. "There is no water. The river is almost dry. I thought of strolling along the banks to get an idea of the water, though. The rain ought to come soon."

That was what it came to in the end. We went down the river and surveyed it. As we returned, a cloud began to loom behind the twin peaks of Rhosgyll. I saw Cadwalldr Jones for the second time coming out of one of the detestably small stone houses that clutter Gyllgwyn. He raised his battered hat gallantly. Anglers have a masonic friendliness. He was not sure yet that I was an angler, but with the river as low as it was, he could not put me to the test.

Hereabouts the folk are a block of stumbling and a rock of offence to their more nationalistic countrymen. They speak English among themselves, peppering it at the worst with Welsh turns to English phrases.

"Rain coming?" I ventured as we passed.

He nodded. "Yes, yes," he assented. "It will rain, I think."

"What an odd man," said my wife.

"I think he's an idealist," I said. "At all events, he's a fisherman."

I felt that he was an idealist then. I wonder now.

We arrived at the hotel just before the beginning of what was to prove the very father and mother of a storm. It was probably still worse up in the mountains, but in Gyllgwyn the rain fell in sheets,

the gutters were torrents, thunder boomed, and lightning flashed. This promised fishing weather. The river fills rapidly, falls almost as rapidly, fed by the mountain rills.

There were clusters again on the bridge next morning. But this time they looked on brown turbidity, racing and roaring below, swishing noisily against the grey stone piers. Though hardly a word was exchanged, there was a palpable atmosphere of cheerfulness in all that motley company, though it was still raining. Before lunch the sky cleared.

A fly was a vain thing then. But after lunch I put up my rod, and went down to the river to spin a phantom. For weeks the weary salmon had been hanging off the mouth of the river, in the estuary, waiting to come up. There was water to carry them now, not so muddy as it had been, but strong, fast, deep. After its bath the country rose up in a mantle of delicately-renewed green, the air smelt clean and fresh, there was charm in the rain-washed blue of the sky.

I selected a pool with a rapid at its head, a long narrow pool, fringed on the farther side with alders, grassy and open on mine. The tingle of the game stimulated me as I made my first cast. The blue-and-white phantom fell lightly under an alder and came spinning industriously across and down. As I reeled in, and prepared for a second cast, my eye caught sight of a figure down near the tail of the pool. I saw it clothed darkly, distinguished a bowler hat. Could it be Cadwalldr Jones?

I had one half-hearted pull before I finished the pool. That was all. When I came to Cadwalldr I saw that he had a rod, and was fishing. He nodded, and gave my rod and tackle an inspired glance. His line remained in the water, dangling from the end of a quite inadequate rod, a dilapidated greenheart, broken in the top joint, and bound roughly with a fragment of reel-line.

"Doesn't seem to be much moving!" I said, coming to a halt to fill a pipe. "Had any luck?"

"An eel," said Cadwalldr.

"Trying for sewin?" I asked.

"Yes; but indeed there are not many."

"There ought to be," I said. "The fish have been hanging about below for weeks, they tell me; and this flood——"

He shook his head. "I haf got thirty sewin from here in an afternoon. Indeed it was a good place once."

Never disdain the advice of the local angler. He may not know much about flies, but he does know something of the local fish. I wanted to know more.

"Ah, I see it's like a good many other rivers, not what it used to be. Can you tell me why—mills, road-tar, sewage?"

Cadwalldr tightened his lips. "There's the tweed-mill, but

it is always there; even when I catch those thirty sewins."

His line went off suddenly. He struck, began to reel in, and landed with saddened disgust a half-pound eel.

When he had disengaged it from his hook and thrown in again, I returned to the charge. "What then? Are there nets down below?"

"There are nets," he agreed. "But it isn't that one would say. Look you, sir; there is many sewin comes up and salmon too, and indeed there might be good fishing if it weren't for the poachers."

"Poachers!" I cried indignantly.

"Yes, yes," he said, almost passionately. "There was never so many poachers in Wales as there is in Gyllgwyn. There is perhaps a hundred salmons come up with this flood, and how many will there be to-morrow night, think you?"

"There's some cover under the banks," I said anxiously.

Cadwalldr's eyes flashed. The intensity of his sportsmanlike indignation seemed even to excel my own. It did my heart good to hear the fervent anger in his voice. "Cover, look you! It is the cover that kills the salmons indeed. For the salmons is the very stupidest fish that ever was."

I was amused at his natural history. "You really think so?"

For a moment I really think he suspected me of being only an angler by courtesy. "It isn't what I think. It's what it is. The salmons are tam fools, and no better. They will get their heads under the bank, or under a stone, and lie there until a hook is stuck in them. When a salmons can stick his head into a hole or under a rock, he thinks no one can see him."

"So that's how they do it here?" I commented. "Gaff them when they're lying in shelter."

"Yes, yes, indeed," said Cadwalldr. "And you will fish two days after this, sir, and you will see nothing to catch, but there will be salmons eating all through Gyllgwyn."

"Can't it be stopped?" I asked.

He grunted. "And how would it? Is there more than one watcher? And there is more than three rivers to watch."

"It's disgusting!" I agreed. "Now if this gaffing could be put down, on rivers like this, where every one can fish, there would be sport for every one."

"There would be lovely fishing, sir; for this is a lovely river indeed, and there would be amusements for all at it."

I left Cadwalldr. A third eel interrupted our conversation. As I fished the next pool, I thought of him with sympathetic regret. There was no question of narrow parvenu preserving here; no wealthy riparian proprietor to forbid fair fishing. And here was an intelligent labouring man, with sporting instincts, prepared to

fish in a fair sporting way, in a river regularly devastated by poachers. There seemed to be something undemocratic about the whole thing. However, as it stood, I had better make the best of my day; while the water remained high and brown gaffs were at a discount.

I fished down for a mile, caught four large sewin, and had an unsatisfactory ten-minutes' tussle with a big grilse, too lightly hooked. The water was clearing. I changed my phantom for a salmon-fly, and went on. I added two more sewin to my bag, then put up and went back to the hotel.

Anglers' wives are patient creatures. Golfers' wives are, of course, still more patient; since a day's fishing can be described in half an hour, while one round of golf may be debated, detail by detail, from dinner-time till midnight. But a merciful man is merciful to his wife. I merely showed my fish, and mentioned the plaint of Cadwalldr Jones.

"He seems quite a sport," she said; "doesn't he?"

"Quite," I agreed. "An idealist, as I said before. His eyes told me that. It is something to have come across the one just man in Gyllgwyn."

"You'd better go out to-morrow early," she said practically, "if what he says is true."

There are sportsmen among peasants, and Cadwalldr's nice principles were not in themselves a justification for the interest I took in him. At the base of it, more likely, was his position as the one just man in Gyllgwyn. A monument of virtue in a graveyard of reputations is naturally suspect. Without suspecting him, I wondered how he had risen superior to his environment; I wondered at his passionate denunciation of what was locally considered a mere peccadillo. With the instinct of the amateur psychologist, I wished to study him closely, and to understand, if it might be, the mainsprings of his virtuous emotion when poaching was mentioned.

I went out early next day. The river had certainly run down a great deal: it was now of that rich brown which vulgarians not inaptly (if grossly) refer to as "porter colour." It gave promise of great things, and made me for the moment forget my philosophic abstractions with regard to Cadwalldr Jones.

To-day the mysteries had reasserted themselves. The line of alders on the far bank was intriguingly punctuated with squatting figures, motionless in their shelters as Buddhist monks. I saw no man of them do anything. They seemed simply to sit, looking abstractedly into the water beneath them. So far the ritual of the shading hats was not in evidence. Perhaps they were passively admiring nature.

I put up a small "Silver Doctor" on a sea-trout cast, and waded into a shallow. At the third cast I saw the bright flash of a sewin turning over

at my fly. I struck too quickly, and saw him no more. At the tail of the pool I landed an impudent smolt, and a venturesome brown trout of immature years. Young brown trout do these things. Nothing is too large, nothing too small, as eleemosynary institutions assure us when they are in need of funds.

I continued down-stream until I came to a pool at a bend. Rocks lay beneath the current, making inviting whirlpools, splendid miniature harbours for resting salmon. White water seethed and foamed at the head of the pool; then came a swift brown race, to end with a shining shallow on the pebble bed. I fished the pool thoroughly, lighted a pipe, rested, and began again. Half-way down I struck something.

The something most obviously resented my blow, twenty yards of line sung out through the rings, and a silver bar left the water and commenced a series of skipjack antics along the surface. As he went under again he ran towards my feet, swerved dexterously round my waders, and made a lightning dash for the pool below.

He had amphibian traits, and seemed as happy in the air as in his native element. He leaped like a thing possessed, between under-water dashes, and cunning attempts to involve my gut-cast in razor-edged rock crevices.

He was just under five pounds, a fresh-run sewin, glittering, splendid in his panoply of shining scales. He was an outward and visible sign of further favours to come.

I continued down-stream. Then I saw Cadwalldr. He was on the bank of a streamy pool in a devotional attitude. Even at this distance I could see that he had reverently taken off his battered bowler hat and knelt down. He held his hat over his eyes, over the water, as if in salute, respectful but humble, to some watery deity.

This pool was much clearer than those I had fished. Cadwalldr did not see me approach. He was intent on his mysterious devotions. It was only when I approached within a few paces that he looked up. His eyes held a mild reproach, as one who should say, "I forgive you, even while I reprobate your intrusion."

"Good morning!" I said conciliatingly. "I hope I didn't startle you?"

"Oh, indeed no," he said; "but, look you, sir, if there isn't a salmons here, that one might take."

I bent by him, but could see nothing. He lent me the shade of his hat brim. Then I saw. Half under the bank, near the bottom, a nice salmon, about fifteen pounds weight, lay finning gently. It occurred to me that Cadwalldr's solicitude had in it something pathetic and moving. He had come there to bend sympathetically over one of the river's already doomed visitors, to take leave

of it, as it were, before some unsportsmanlike rustic put a crude end to its career.

"I suppose some one will have it before long?" I said with regret.

He nodded. "And look you too, sir, if you come with me there is another good salmons lying under a log."

I followed him. He was right. There was a ten-pounder of an optimistic temperament lying half under a sunken log. He was certainly right—but what industry! What indefatigable patience! What an amount of virtuous observation expended without hope of reward!

"It's amazing," I agreed. "I suppose it wouldn't be any good to splash and frighten it farther out, eh?"

"No, no," said he. "The salmons is like the children and the fire, look you. They will go back whatefer you can do."

He replaced his hat. It occurred to me that he might like to accompany me in my fishing. I showed him my sewin, and received his congratulations, but he did not wish to come. He preferred to sit there, mourning over an impending tragedy, considering with an afflicted eye the doomed fish below.

"I would not be surprised, sir, if it was gone when you come up again. No, indeed!" he confided to me as I turned away. "And it is a nice fish too, a lofely fish indeed."

Again he was right. When I came up-river again, towards lunch time, the salmon underneath the log had vanished. In fact they had both vanished. Cadwalldr's vigil had not saved them, his indignant prophecy had been fulfilled. I pictured him retreating disgustedly townwards, his head hanging, his battered bowler over his dejected eyes, a prey to melancholia engendered by contemplating the unsportsmanlike instincts of his fellow-residents.

"I suppose some one came and gaffed them when he had gone home," my wife suggested when I told her. "After all, you couldn't expect the poor fellow to sit watching them all day."

"I did not expect it," I said. "To tell you the truth, it is beginning to dawn on me that those men sitting under the alders are nothing less than poachers!"

"I thought so yesterday!" said my wife.

How like a woman! That's the sort of remark women make on chance. If they prove right they say it's instinct.

Meanwhile the sun remained hot, and no further rain came to keep the river at a good level. It was running pretty low and clear next day. There were fewer Buddhists on the banks. Tentatively I looked into many pools, but saw no salmon. My salmon-fly, small as it was, went unregarded, and I devoted myself for the next few days to trout.

I did badly. The river grew lower and lower, and the trout were sulky. I was told locally that I ought to have come in April for the trout. That is

always the way. When you come in April you learn that the rivers fish best in September. "There was jam yesterday, there will be jam tomorrow, but there is never jam to-day."

Still, I improved my acquaintance with Cadwalldr. He fished a great deal, he told me—probably in April. In fact, it must have been April that saw him fishing a great deal. Gloomily he pointed out to me how his prophecies had been fulfilled. There was not a salmon left in the river—"those fellows" had, like the Walrus and the Carpenter in 'Alice,' "eaten them every one."

For the first time Cadwalldr was wrong. I demonstrated that next day, and in his presence. If I had not demonstrated it in his presence I should still be speculating on the case of Cadwalldr Jones.

I had left early to fish a pool about a mile below the town. This pool was fairly deep, and at the head of it was a run which was still mock-turbulent below a miniature waterfall. I had put up a cast of large trout-flies to fish it, the tail-fly a big Zulu, with silver-ribbed body.

Cautiously approaching the top run, I cast. I worked on down to the tail. Nothing happened. As I turned to look up, I saw Cadwalldr approaching the waterfall; almost at the same moment something splashed in the foaming run, and I caught a gleam of silver. Hurray! One salmon had escaped the holocaust, and it would be sheer cruelty to allow him to pine away companionless.

But I had forgotten my salmon-flies, my gaff. I had a landing-net for medium trout, and my cast was not notably strong.

I hurried up before Cadwalldr reached me, and cast over where I had seen the fish splash. The Zulu sank, began to circle in an eddy. At that moment something "boiled" on the surface, and my rod bent in a bow. The reel sang shrilly, an arrow ripple tore down the pool. Then the salmon jumped. He went up two feet, turned gleaming in the air, and plunged below.

I was very conscious of my deficiencies in equipment. Was he well hooked? Would the cast stand the strain even if he were? Would I find it possible to steer him and it clear of all the underwater dangers? I was too occupied with these serious thoughts to notice Cadwalldr, who had come up behind me, and watched with grave interest the progress of the struggle.

As the minutes went by my spirits rose. The hook was well into the gristly mouth; the gut confirmed all its maker's lyric praises. I was getting my fish in hand. I could check him when he ran for a Scylla and Charybdis opening below; I could put gentle persuasive pressure on him when he tried to saw my cast on a convenient rock. He moved sullenly now, cruising up and down, refusing to be driven,

but not always to be led. I saw him pass many times almost under my feet, from where I stood on a rock ledge three feet above the water, and I judged him to be eight or nine pounds weight.

Cadwalldr had not spoken. I turned my head suddenly to address him. "Rotten luck, isn't it? I've left my gaff at home, and I'm too high up here to tail him."

"Yes, yes," he agreed mournfully. "And it is a pity, indeed."

My salmon was now ready for removal. I held him short by the head, wondering what to do next. How was I to lift him?

I bethought me of Cadwalldr. I turned, to find him gone. Where had he gone? I looked quickly behind. He stood near a hazel-tree, and appeared to be busy cutting a long thin branch. I returned anxiously to my fish.

I knelt down, almost lost my balance and my salmon, as I tried to insert my fingers under a gaping gill. It was no good. I became a convinced believer in Browning's dictum: "The little more and how much it is; the little less, and what worlds away."

Suddenly I heard a voice, and saw Cadwalldr just below me.

"If you'll bring him down this way!"

I obeyed like a man in a dream. Cadwalldr bent, his arm moved down, then back, and as he raised himself my fish rose slowly out of the water, and lay gasping on the rock.

I did not speak. I killed my fish, leaving the "Zulu" in his dead gristly jaw. Cadwalldr did not speak either. He sat down and commenced gravely to unwind the cord with which he had bound a steel gaff-hook to a thin hazel branch. When he had finished he solemnly stowed the hook away in an inner pocket. It seemed a very large pocket, and took up most of the lining of his coat. He did not explain to me then or thereafter how he came to have such a thing on his person. There was no humility or abjectness in his bearing, no apologetic shade in his eyes.

Well, that is, in brief, the case of Cadwalldr Jones. My wife says there is no case. She avers that Cadwalldr was just a poacher like the rest. My instinct tells me otherwise.

I see him as a dual personality, a bucolic Jekyll and Hyde. I believe he is an idealist, with fits of pragmatism. He is both beneath and above the practice of hypocrisy. He believes what he says when he says it. Can all of us say as much?

His last words to me proved that, I think. As I rewarded him and turned to go home, he spoke—

"Indeed, sir, and I'm pleased you caught that salmons; for, look you, if those fellows had come along yesterday, there would have been no fish left—no, indeed!"

JOHN HASLETTE VAHEY.

FROM THE OUTPOSTS.

A LEADER OF MEN.

YA NYUN came from a tract of hilly country about fifty miles south-west of Mandalay, and had been a cavalry officer in the Burmese Army. The system was very much like that of feudal times in Europe: his standing was more or less hereditary, and he had to provide the Government with a certain number of mounted men in case of need. A curious figure they must have cut on parade, on little twelve-hand Burma ponies, with red cloth saddles and red tassels hanging from the saddles and bridles, bare-footed, with the big toe hooked into a very short stirrup—a perilously insecure seat it looks, but every Burma pony is taught to amble, and as the Burman horseman has no inclination to jump, he sticks on fairly well on the flat. The position of these cavalry leaders was vague: they had some sort of authority over the villagers and the village headmen and some powers of punishment. Powers and jurisdictions were not very carefully defined in Burma, and the main thing was to have a friend at Court. This Ya Nyun had, and he used his friendship to good purpose.

As soon as he secured his appointment, which his father had at one time held before him and had used to put a rival to death, he collected round him a band of hangers-on, and started to commit dacoities in the surrounding villages. This was some years before the annexation, when there were no local tribunals to appeal to, and the only remedy was to go to Mandalay and try to persuade somebody more influential than Ya Nyun's patron to put a stop to his practices. Going to Mandalay was an expensive and unpopular occupation; in the first place, you had to collect your money and take it with you in hard cash; roads were lonely, and your rival was sure to hear of your intentions, and unless you went with a well-armed party you were not likely to arrive with the money, if, indeed, you were lucky enough to arrive at all. Then, having arrived, you might very likely find that the Minister whom you hoped to get on your side had just been degraded over some little affair touching one of the maids of honour, or some breach of Court etiquette; perhaps he had inadvertently squatted down in such a position that the sole of his foot was visible to the royal eye. Even if you found him you had to start by paying his hangers-on to gain access to him, and then you had to offer your profoundest respects to the great

man himself. Your respects might not be sufficient, and you might be sent back to get more, if you were not dismissed indignantly from the presence; they might, on the other hand, be so gratifying that you were detained in the capital while messengers were sent to see if you had not by any chance left anything behind you at home: it was almost better to be a Jew under King John than a rich man in Burma.

But Ya Nyun's doings became so bad that some steps had to be taken, and a deputation faced the dangers of the journey and the Court. They met with some success; the affair reached the royal ear, and Ya Nyun was summoned to make his explanations. Explanations, needless to say, were of the same nature as respects, and in this case they were substantial enough to be accepted, and he was allowed to return to his district, where he naturally carried on his calling more industriously than ever to recoup himself for the expenses of his journey to Mandalay. A few years later his oppressions became so intolerable that, in spite of the previous failure, a second deputation went up to make another attempt to bring him to book. This time their respects were insufficient, and one of their number was sent back to bring some more. On reaching home he fell in with some of Ya Nyun's friends, who dealt with him after the custom of the country: he was not killed, but was severely beaten, and this was a little too much even for the Burmese Government, and Ya Nyun was sent for once again, and might have got the punishment he deserved had not greater events distracted attention from him. Just at this moment the British ultimatum arrived, followed rapidly by the British expedition, which proceeded up the Irrawaddy with indecent haste, utterly undismayed by mud forts armed with dummy guns along the banks. Ya Nyun, who had come in disgrace, returned in triumph, a gold umbrella over his head, with unlimited powers to raise forces and fight the invader. His old dacoit gang was naturally the nucleus of the force he gathered round him.

The Burmese Government soon ceased to exist, and pay was not to be hoped for; they had to live on what they could get out of the surrounding villages. At first this was not so difficult; it was an out-of-the-way bit of country, full of broken hills and ravines, admirably suited for operations by small bodies of men, and the British troops were too busy in other places to be able to pay adequate attention to them. After a few months, however, a post was established in Ya Nyun's own village, and his position became more precarious. A large number of the surrounding headmen had accepted the British Government as a *fait accompli*, and refused to provide supplies for Ya

Nyun, whose gold umbrella did not command the respect it used to. In a very short time he was an outlaw, a veritable Ishmael, hunted as assiduously by his own people as by the British troops. He still had, however, a large following, and in this rough country could easily keep hidden and make life very unpleasant for the headmen and villagers who had gone over to the new Government. His old opponents who had tried to get him turned out by the Burmese Government naturally suffered first, and the very first man to be caught was the member of the second deputation against him who had been sent back for more money and had received a beating at the hands of Ya Nyun's friends. This time he did not get off with a beating, and was murdered in cold blood.

The record of the murders and dacoities committed by the gang is amazing; at least thirty murders are known to have been committed in cold blood apart from those committed in the course of dacoities. The dacoities as often as not took place in broad daylight, as many as four or five hundred men being concerned in some of them; villages were looted and burned wholesale—a Burmese village of bamboo houses burns magnificently in this dry part of the country; anybody who had the courage to resist was killed, the village cattle and very often a few of the village girls were driven off, while if the village had made itself particularly obnoxious a prominent inhabitant would be crucified among the smouldering ruins as a warning to others. In one case a British officer arrived on the scene to find three crucified corpses whose arms had been cut off and put up as a gruesome signpost to point out the way the dacoits had gone.

For nearly five years this gang held out, decreasing in numbers, of course, yearly, and having to adopt less bold measures as time went on; and in the last half of the period not daring to put up a fight with the troops or police as they had done at first, but merely committing their dacoities and then disappearing in small groups in the hills where pursuit was difficult and concealment easy. By degrees they were hunted down and killed or caught, or persuaded to surrender; offers of pardon were freely made at first, and more than three years after the annexation Ya Nyun was actually offered a free pardon if he would give himself up. But he never showed any inclination to do so; he probably knew well enough that even if Government gave him a pardon his life would be of very little value in his own district, where every village had suffered from his dacoities and half the leading men had deaths in their families to avenge.

At last the net closed round him; his followers had dwindled to a mere handful, and one day a number of these were run to

earth and seven were killed, including a brother of Ya Nyun. This made his position hopeless, and he surrendered, persuaded by a promise that his life would be spared. Whoever gave the promise had no authority to do so, as all offers of pardon or clemency had long been withdrawn; but given it was. He was tried on various charges, and was sentenced to transportation for life, the promise that he would not be hung being kept, given without authority though it was. The vast majority of the murders and dacoities committed by his gang were never judicially tried; evidence was difficult to obtain, most of the gang had been killed or had surrendered long before on promise of pardon, and it was impossible to prove how far he had been directly responsible for the acts of his followers.

Very soon afterwards Ya Nyun was transported to the Andamans; he was one of many Burmans who had been sent there in recent years for similar offences, and his importance was hardly realised. Such a man might well have been expected to give trouble, but he did not; he soon, however, showed that he still possessed the same influence as he had in his own country, and he rose to the highest posts of convict warder, and justified his promotion by hard work and exemplary conduct.

The Andaman Islands receive prisoners of all sorts and kinds from all over India, and some ten years later a number of Pathans from the North-West Frontier came down. These were the remains of a gang who in their own time and place had given almost as much trouble as Ya Nyun himself, and for three or four years had harassed the border and committed murders and robberies in British territory. Two expeditions had been necessary to run them down, and three British officers had been killed before they were all accounted for. Of the leaders, one was killed, and the other, Jan, with one of his most trusty lieutenants, Shinkai, and several followers, surrendered, again on a promise that their lives would be spared. The careers of Ya Nyun and Jan are curiously alike in general outline, and their courses, which began at opposite corners of the Indian Empire, ran together at the end in a wonderfully dramatic manner. The Pathan is by general consent about the best and most truculent fighting man in India, and the Burman is perhaps the least amenable to discipline, and few would have dared to prophesy that if Ya Nyun and Jan found themselves up against one another it would be Ya Nyun who would be on the side of law and order, and would come out the victor.

Jan and his associates did not take to the life of a penal settlement as amenably as Ya Nyun had done, and before they had been there long five of them ran away, Jan and

two more from one station, and Shinkai and a companion from another. Runaways are common enough, but as escape from the islands is almost impossible, the great majority give themselves up in a few days, finding life in the jungle more uncomfortable, if less laborious, than in the convict stations. This, however, was no ordinary escape; a short time before a number of men belonging to a famous dacoit gang had escaped together, and had tried to take up their old profession at the expense of the cultivators in the villages, and prompt measures were taken to hunt down Jan and his friends and prevent a repetition of that affair. The islands are covered with the densest tropical jungle everywhere, except in the actual convict settlement, where the land has been cleared for cultivation, and to track down and catch runaways who really mean business is a most difficult undertaking. The only men who know the jungles and can get about them with any ease are the little half-naked aborigines who roam through them with bow and arrow to shoot the pig which abound there and to gather the wild fruits and roots which form their food.

Now it so happened that at this time Ya Nyun was the convict warder in charge of the Andamanese Home, where the little men come in to barter the shells and other things which they collect for tea, sugar, tobacco, and similar luxuries of civilisation for which they have acquired a taste. He had at times accompanied them in their wanderings through the jungle, a life which came easily to him, and as he had acquired a good deal of influence over them, he was sent out in charge of them to hunt down the Pathans. The chase was so keen that the two groups of Pathans were unable to get together, and in four or five days Shinkai and his companion were run down by Ya Nyun and his Andamanese and a guard of police. On the coast some miles from the settlement is a solitary clearing, once cultivated but later abandoned. Some reports having been received that the men had gone in this direction, the pursuers followed, and were soon rewarded by finding tracks on the sandy beach and signs of a recent fire. The tracks were followed up, and soon a keen-sighted Andamanese saw two men on a little hill a few hundred yards inland. The police went round through the jungle and surrounded the hill on the farther side, while Ya Nyun, now thoroughly at home, and the Andamanese advanced through the long grass till they were within bowshot, when Ya Nyun went forward and called on them to surrender. They were both armed, having managed to steal weapons since their escape, and a Pathan at bay is not a pleasant person to deal with. The oriental does not place a very

high value on his life, and a Mahomedan has a safe entry into Paradise if he meets his fate while killing an infidel. But Ya Nyun had no intention of being killed, and when the men refused to drop their arms and surrender, he called on the Andamanese and police to fire. A volley of buckshot and Andamanese arrows at close range is fairly certain, and the men were extremely lucky to escape with their lives.

Jan and his two companions were still at large, and Ya Nyun proceeded to run them down also. A few days later their tracks were found in the jungle far away on the west of the islands. This time there were no police in the expedition at all, and Ya Nyun and his Andamanese had their own way entirely. To add to the dangers of the enterprise, the jungles on this side of the island are inhabited by the hostile Andamanese tribe of the Jarawas, as hostile to other tribes of their own race as to strangers, and it is no easy task to persuade the tame Andamanese to enter their country. Ya Nyun, however, succeeded, and on the second day tracks were found on the shore, and signs that a raft had recently been built. It looked as if the runaways were making a desperate attempt to set out to sea on the chance of being picked up by some passing ship. It was a wild hope in the north-east monsoon, for ships in those seas are few and far between, and there is no land nearer than Africa. They followed up the coast, and soon found that their suspicions were correct; with a little more luck the runaways would have got off, to an almost certain death at sea, it is true, but with a bare chance of escape. The raft had stuck on a shoal just off the shore, and the three desperate men on it saw their pursuers come down to the water's edge. They were well armed with dahs and axes, but the odds were heavily against them; Ya Nyun had a gun, and one of the Andamanese had another, while the rest had their deadly bows and arrows. There was still a fighting chance, and they took it. One man waded ashore and ran off into the jungle, while the other two sat on the raft. Ya Nyun left most of the Andamanese to watch the raft, and followed the man who had run away; he was soon overtaken, and as he refused to surrender Ya Nyun shot him, killing him on the spot. He then returned to the shore and ordered the other two to give themselves up. They put down their dahs and waded towards them, but as they got near one of the Andamanese saw a knife in Jan's waist-cloth. He called out, and as he did so Jan rushed at Ya Nyun. There was still a chance, but Jan had met his match. The Andamanese fired a volley of arrows at him, and both guns went off at the same moment. Jan fell dead with two charges of buckshot and eighteen arrows in his

body. It was Ya Nyun's day; for the first time for fifteen years he was in his element,—he was a leader of men, he had killed his enemies, and the old instincts, the pride of race which every Burman has in his heart, came out again. Twenty-four hours later a grisly procession marched into headquarters; it was led by a tall bearded Pathan, half dead with fatigue and terror, carrying a blood-stained sack, driven along by Ya Nyun, a smile of triumph on his face, and followed by a crowd of little black men, each bearing his bow and arrows, still telling one another the story of what had happened. At Ya Nyun's order the Pathan opened the sack and rolled from it the heads of his fellows.

A little wizened-up Burman was still to be met in the Andamans not long ago; he was to all intents and purposes a free man, and was treated with marked respect by the other convicts. He was generally known for some obscure reason as Sadhu, which in Hindustani means a holy man. He deserved much credit for the way he had worked and lived in transportation, where his conduct had gone far to expiate the appalling crimes of his youth. But one who, like the present writer, has lived in his old district and heard men who fought against him and suffered from his oppressions speak of him with terror and hatred nearly a generation later, and who has seen the cunning cruel eyes which belie the friendly smile with which he would greet you, is inclined to doubt whether even the orderly conduct of the last half of his life earned him his title, and to agree with those in authority in his country who declined to permit him to return to his old home in any circumstances.

F.

'THE BEGGAR'S OPERA' IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

BY MRS COMYNS CARR.

THE great world of London was on the tiptoe of expectation during the first weeks of the year 1728, for it was announced that Rich, the manager of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, would produce an opera in English by John Gay on the 29th of January. It was said that the work would contain every sort of novelty, with much pungent wit at the expense of high personages. And there had never been such a thing as an opera in English.

Plays with a song or two in the vernacular had been heard of as pleasing to the lower orders, but opera proper had only been born with that great advent of Italian singers in London which Addison deplores; and even so had lived a financially precarious but gradually brightening life as it became the fashion for Fashion to patronise it, until the Italian Opera was the thing—and the only thing—for any one who was anybody to be seen at. Yet it seems never to have paid.

Swift is said to have remarked to Gay that "a Newgate pastoral might make an odd pretty sort of thing," and this may have been the seed which germinated in the author's brain; but Gay—naturally satirical, and with the bitterness bred of his misfortunes—had many an axe to grind, and it was his luck to touch the frolicsome humour of the hour.

Beggared in the South Sea Bubble, the unfortunate poet had led a thwarted life, seeking, and not finding, the preferment from the great which he considered due to his talents, and making his position worse by sneers at the Court and the Government.

When the new Queen Caroline was Princess of Wales, Gay had managed to gain access to her, and flattered by some verses of his on the infant Duke of Cumberland, she had promised him a place at Court. But these verses did not please the powers that were in office—and how could they? Disregarding the advice of his friends Pope and Swift, Gay had peppered them with allusions which could not but give offence, and all that the Queen was able to obtain for him was the paltry post of gentleman-usher to the Princess Louisa.

Gay, furious at what he considered a fresh insult, retaliated by scathing satire of people in high places put into the mouths of characters in the opera. None of this means anything to us, who judge the work purely upon its merits; its gay, rollicking, impossible story; its perilously broad farcical

jollity, which might perhaps not have drawn the town twenty years ago as it does to-day; its vivid pictures of Hogarthian manner and Hogarthian dress —the dress of fashion then, but to us a faithful reproduction of our great-grandparents; and last, but not least, its entrancing music.

But to the public of 1728 the satire meant much, and perhaps spiciest of all to musical dilettanti was the hope of a skit on the shibboleth of Italian Opera and its prima donnas of the day—Cuzzoni and Faustina, a fierce fight between whom was rending society into two parties, and providing one of the main topics for the ponderous wit that was practised in all the fashionable assemblies.

In his introduction, Gay himself virtually acknowledges his sarcastic intentions.

"This piece, I own, was originally writ for celebrating the marriage of James Chanter and Molly Lay—two most excellent ballad singers. I have introduced the similes that are in all your celebrated operas—the Swallow, the Moth, the Bee, the Ship, the Flower. Besides, I have a prison scene which the ladies always reckon charmingly pathetic. As to the parts, I have observed such a nice impartiality to our two ladies that it is impossible for either of them to take offence."

After all, the novelty and the charm of the genuine national music was what achieved the success of the opera.

The real musicians among the audience, and perhaps even those simple folk who heard in the tunes the airs which they had sung on the village greens of their old homes, led the applause. The more supercilious occupants of the boxes —taught to consider nothing music except the trills and cadenzas written to show off the voices of the darling stars of Italian Opera—may have feared to approve until authorised by fashion. Burney, indeed, their recognised mouthpiece, declared the songs to be "wild, rude, and often vulgar"; yet the time came when every miss in society, who aspired to be "accomplished," piped them *ad nauseam*.

Addison, who had always sneered at Italian Opera, declaring that "we know not what we like, and are only transported by anything that is not English," knew what he liked that night.

The songs had been admirably chosen and harmonised by the musical director of the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre and organist to Charter House, John Christopher Pepusch, a Prussian by birth but long resident in England, who also composed the overture founded on one of the themes.

Many of these lovely unadorned melodies — English, Scottish, and Irish—some of them too old to be dated, and probably written down from the mouths of peasants as they had been remembered for generations, are of much artistic

merit; and one fragment at least is traced to the air "Britons, strike home!" by our own great national composer, Purcell, whose music—though never performed among us as it should be, much of it being still only preserved in manuscript—holds so high a place in the world's achievement.

The original score of 'The Beggar's Opera,' preserved in the Bodleian, is not precise in acknowledging the origin of the tunes; but on Dr Ernest Walker's authority one may say that the air of Purcell's "What shall I do to show how much I love her," is also to be found there, and the original tune composed by Carey to his own words of "Sally in our Alley"; this is not the later eighteenth century air associated with them, which was modified from one of much earlier date.

A few of the songs were set to popular folk-tunes of the day, while some of the incidental music of the opera is said to owe something to Handel. This, indeed, it was likely to do, he being the recognised master of style, with thirty-six grand operas to his credit, though it was only after the sweeping success of 'The Beggar's Opera'—inaugurating, as it did, a long period of ballad opera not ended in our own day—that Handel transferred his great talents to oratorio, upon which his fame rests.

The opera had been refused by Colley Cibber because it criticised and even lampooned the mighty in their seats. But what Cibber had not guessed was that the very danger he dreaded was the spice which gave flavour to the dish. For the people were becoming aware of the corruption among men who had undertaken to work in their interests, and the wanton extravagance and self-indulgence of the classes who presumably were supposed to give them a good example. Though the "pampered menials" in the cheap seats were no better than their masters, they were all the more likely to applaud these deft caricatures of them, while the masters would not dare to admit how well the cap fitted.

Royalty was probably well advised not to face the satire, but the Government was represented.

"Two great ministers were in a box together," says Swift, "and all the world staring at them."

No wonder! For one was very likely Townshend, and the other Sir Robert Walpole himself, in none too good odour at the moment either with the Court or the people. There was talk that he was not wholly unconnected with the bursting of the great South Sea Bubble, a financial disaster under which many in the audience—from the affected and perfumed gentlemen in the boxes to their no less affected and equally unscrupulous footmen in the upper galleries—were wrathfully smarting. Some sneers were

not lacking as to Sir Robert remaining in office only through the Queen's weakness for him and her clever handling of her spouse; and soberer men were shaking their heads over Chancellor Macclesfield's recent trial for corruption.

Peachum's first song must have been enough to send a suppressed titter round the house.

"And the statesman because he's so great
Thinks his trade is as honest as mine,"

sings this valiant person, after having just declared his intention of sparing a thief because he "can get more by her staying in England" than by her transportation.

Every one who has seen the opera knows that this alleged caricature of "a person in office" soon makes it clear that he is himself the first of all the thieves in London; and when he flies into a passion with his daughter for being secretly married to a highwayman, it is because this gentleman is not one of his own gang, and not at all because he is a dissolute wretch liable to be hung for theft and bigamy.

But the skit is so broad and the whole caricature is so embracing that it is not wonderful to be told Sir Robert was wise enough to be well amused. Yet some must have echoed Lockit's warning to Peachum of "Learn to be more guarded," when, in the quarrel between the two, the latter declares that "In one respect, indeed, our employment may be reckoned dishonest, because, like great statesmen, we encourage those who betray their friends."

Broad enough! Yet presently the daring author cries—

"When you censure the age
Be cautious and sage
Lest the courtiers offended should be.
If you mention vice or bribe,
'Tis so pat to all the tribe
Each cries: 'That was levelled at me.'"

What could have been more apropos?

The whole house turned to the Prime Minister's box, declares a witness of the scene; yet it was he who enthusiastically led the *encore*, and the doggerel was repeated over and over again.

Fortunately no satirical innuendoes were allotted to the fascinating heroine; her songs are maidenly and sentimental, defiant, coquettish or "provoking," to use the word of the day, according to requirement, but never vixenish as with the other characters.

"Can love be controlled by advice,
And Cupid our mothers obey?"

she warbles demurely, or pathetically pleads with a cruel father in the lines, to a delightful air—

"For on the rope that hangs my dear
Depends poor Polly's life."

From that moment and all through her sorely-tried loyalty to her bewitching highwayman, the men's sympathy is with *her;* but the ladies—the ladies

are of Polly's own mind. The scene in which Hogarth painted her and her rival—the picture is in the Tate Gallery—as they beg mercy of their respective fathers for the chained darling, was probably pronounced, as Gay intended, "charmingly pathetic."

A wild scene the front of the house seems to have been. It was not a moment when decorous and restrained manners prevailed, and what to our generation is a vivid picture of the past was to those present a shameless but highly diverting reproduction of actual life.

Moralists like Burke might pronounce it "subversive in social tendency," and Dr Johnson certainly—though to the vexation of Boswell—declared it, perhaps not without justice, to be "such a labefaction of all principles as may be injurious to morality."

Whether the play was responsible for any increase in the profligacy of that dissolute age it is not easy to say. One can scarcely fancy such rhodomontade and exuberance of wickedness being regarded as anything but roaring farce; but sure it is that Society—seeing itself for the first time held up to the mirror of Truth—laughed at the picture with hearty appreciation, each rejoicing in the accurate portrait of a friend or enemy; nothing but Hogarth's so-called caricatures had so tickled them before. And Society was well to the fore.

The Duchess of Queensberry—Gay's constant patroness, familiar to the public in doggerel verse as "Prior's Kitty" because of that poet's adoration of her—must have been in one of the stiff boxes that ran round the theatre filled with little heads in dainty lace caps, their patches on the Whig or Tory side of the face, posed (a contemporary fashion paper tells us) "so as to give disdain, an amorous languish, or a cunning glance."

The "lovely Kitty," as Swift calls her, was in the bloom of her youth—a youth which the fastidious Horace Walpole declares many years later to be perennial, although her outrages on conventionality were such that he could not refrain from crying out on her as "an out-pensioner of Bedlam." Presumably in that first of all female considerations — dress, Fashion's autocrat, Beau Nash, was of the same mind, seeing the sneers he flung at her in Bath for "wearing an apron like an abigail."

We may note *en passant* that these aprons became the vogue, but on this occasion Kitty was certainly *en grande tenue*, her beautiful shoulders rising very bare out of her stiff unadorned bodice, and her great side-hoops keeping the bewigged and beruffled beaux who thronged her box at their proper distance. For the dresses in the boxes were of the same mode as the dresses on the stage, although it is to be doubted whether the latter at-

tained anything like the elegance prevalent among the actresses of our own day. At a time when priceless laces and brocades were worn by men and women alike, it could not have been that poor players were able to vie with the leaders of Fashion.

Yet the day came when pretty Lavinia Fenton, the Polly Peachum of that first performance, had nothing to fear in comparison with the greatest of the ladies of the land. She made an instant success on that January night, and before the year was out became Duchess of Bolton.

Miss Fenton was almost unknown on the stage. Although she had appeared in "legitimate drama" two years before, she made no hit, and had gone home to her father's coffee-house in Charing Cross, perhaps to serve at the bar and forgo all hope of glory. Then luckily some one competent to judge discovered that she had a "lovely voice," when and how trained we do not know, but sufficiently well to satisfy the author and the manager and to win her the praise of the public. Among the many quatrains that, according to the manner of the day, were written in her honour, we find one declaring that—

"Of all the belles that tread the stage
There's none like pretty Polly,
And all the Music of the Age
Beside her voice is Folly!"

That voice and an effective Rubenesque type of beauty—brilliant colouring, frank, prominent brown eyes, as shown in Hogarth's spirited portrait of her in the National Gallery—ensured her triumph. A touch of exuberance mattered little; the hour of the simpering miss of a century later had by no means dawned. She became the darling of the town, from the great ladies who wore her picture on their little fluttering fans, and the perfumed beaux who stood eyeing her in the Mall through their gold-mounted eye-glasses, to the "foolish fellows" who pestered her with stilted verse and the rougher admirers who mobbed her coach in Drury Lane. And "Polly" deserved her popularity, for she was decently behaved in that easy age, and kind and generous-hearted.

It seems to have been generally allowed that she didn't disgrace her "elevation to noble rank," for we find a contributor to a magazine of the period writing that she was "a most agreeable companion, with much wit and good strong sense and a just taste in polite literature." And when she died, Horace Walpole spoke of the event as the demise of the "famous Polly, Duchess of Bolton, after a long life of merit."

Socially "Polly Peachum" won what her astute parents in the play recommended her to aim at, but professionally her triumph was, by her very good fortune, destined to be far shorter-lived than the work which had brought it to her.

The opera was given at Lin-

coln's Inn Fields for sixty-two nights; it was performed all over England, Scotland, and Ireland, to say nothing of so distant a place as Minorca, and it has been revived several times since its original production, always with success.

A *bon mot* of the day declared that it had "made Gay rich and Rich gay"; and though the words may seem to some as more appropriately reversed at the first production, since Gay earned £693 out of the first thirty-six representations and Rich netted £4000 it was a good haul for the needy author, and could he have refrained from following up his luck with ill-judged and ill-starred new ventures, he might have died in ease. But this was not possible to his soured and malicious temper.

Whether the comparative success of scores of imitations that began to appear incensed him, as some suppose, is doubtful; imitation is the best compliment, and besides, his satires continued to be directed against those in power, and not against his fellow-composers.

Certain it is that Gay set the fashion for what were then called "Ballad Operas," which practically killed, for the time, the taste for the Italian Opera; perhaps partly because the simple airs were possible to the amateur, whose untrained voice could not cope with the elaborate *fioriture* which the professional foreign singer held to be the hallmark of his perfection. Unluckily, the English pieces came gradually to be disfigured by adornments thrown in to please the vanity of professional performers; but that was not yet, and for six years after 1728, to quote a popular song of 1730—

"Old England grew fond of old tunes of her own,
And her ballads went up and her operas went down,
Derry down, down, hey derry down, down;"

while another cries in shameless doggerel—

"Poor English mouths for twenty years
Have been shut up from music;
But thank our stars, outlandish airs
At last have made all *you* sick.

When warbling dames were all in flames
And for precedence wrangled,
One English play cut short the fray
And home again they dangled."

Gay might well have been proud of having shown the way to this change, for though the ballad operas may not all have had any marked merit in themselves, they enshrined the good old folk-tunes, as, for example, "The Vicar of Bray" in the 'Quaker's Opera,' 1728; "Black-eyed Susan" in 'The Devil to Pay,' 1730; "The Bailiff's Daughter of Islington" in 'The Jovial Crew,' 1731; "Old King Cole" in 'Achilles,' 1733, and so on. Separate songs, such as "The Lass of Richmond Hill" by Hook, "Wapping old Stairs" by John Percy, &c., were also written during those years and sung about the country.

But poor Gay, hopelessly entangled in his own satire and self-pity, was never permanently to reap his harvest. Inflated by the unhoped-for triumph of his 'Beggar's Opera,' he followed it up with a still more daring attack on Society, and fell into disrepute from which he never recovered.

Could he have realised how notable his new departure in the form of English Opera truly was, and how, nearly two hundred years after his work was written, it would not only still be performed with success on an English stage, but would also prove to have been the forerunner of all comic opera and vaudeville, blossoming in our own day into the favourite works of Gilbert and Sullivan, perhaps his resentful spirit might have been lulled to comparative content and self-satisfaction. As it was, he seems to have thrown up the sponge in disgust and retired from the scene.

Then it was that "Prior's Kitty" — the kind-hearted Duchess of Queensberry—came to the rescue. Though her loyalty to the wild, impossible, out-at-elbows poet was taken as only another proof of the truth of the saying that she was "an out-pensioner of Bedlam," she refused to abandon the man whom she had long ago befriended. The Court threatened her with ostracism if she persisted. She defied the Court, and retired to her country seat with her difficult protégé; there, until his death in 1732, she gave him a permanent home, and we can see her devoting to him that perennial youth which Horace Walpole admitted "would sooner make you take her for a young beauty of an old-fashioned century than for an antiquated goddess of this age."

A CADDIE OF THE CAMPAGNA.

BY J. O. P. BLAND.

GOLFLY speaking, of course, there is no such thing; for an Italian caddie is a contradiction in terms. They ought to spell it "kadi," in the same spirit that the Scottish professional is known to the Principessas and Marchesas of the Rome Golf Club as *maestro*. "Kadi" would convey to the uninitiated a suggestion of the semi-Oriental outlook on life in general, and on golf-players in particular, which these cheery cherubims of the Campagna inherit from their remote Etruscan forefathers, and from Heaven knows what forgotten flotsam of far-flung waves of Asiatic invasions. We of the Northern lands are apt to forget how often and for how long Southern Europe was trampled under foot by Mongolian hordes, from the days when first the Huns (shut out from China by rulers capable of self-defence) began to move southwards and west in search of places in the sun, until the day, 500 years later, when Attila went down before the Franks at Troyes. Yet, for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, the echoing voice and the vanished hand of the East may be discerned almost as clearly to-day in and about the Eternal City as they are in the songs and streets of Andalusia, in the byways of Bohemia, or in the market-places of Moscow.

Be this as it may, the attitude which Caterino, my caddie of the Campagna, manifests towards life in general, towards transient phenomena such as myself, and towards the ancient and royal game of golf, is curiously similar in many ways to that which I have often observed in the tattered urchins who philosophically stand and wait, while the masterful Saxon wields his niblick, in China or Japan. Caterino, unlike them, has the face of a Della Robbia cherubim, eyes of unbelievable innocence, and an unceasing flow of conversation. On my very first appearance at the Acqua Santa Links, by some secret gift of divination and in defiance of all the rules, he marked me down as his lawful prey. I have a sneaking suspicion that his vested, and undisputed, rights were established in secret session, *inter pares*, as the result of a game of *tarocco*. At all events, unless prevented by *force majeure* in the person of the *maestro*, it was always he who emerged from the caddies' den at the first tee with my clubs. At

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the outset, establishing our relations on a genial basis, he would draw my attention to the fact that, in the matter of polish, none could compare with the brilliance which, after much labour, he had bestowed upon them.

With the east wind murmuring gentle songs of spring, and soaring larks, all heedless of pot-hunting gunners, trilling glad hymns to Apollo, Caterino and I used to do a dilettante round against the phantom Colonel before lunch, what time the fashionable world of Rome was just beginning to think of its morning coffee and rolls. A goodly spot for philosophical meditation, and a very pleasant place in the sun, these links of Acqua Santa, that look towards Alba and the Sabine Hills; and Caterino's ceaseless earnest prattle about all things in heaven and earth (except golf) seemed to fit in very harmoniously with the faery music of the choir invisible overhead and the silent message of Cecilia Metella's tomb, speaking across 2000 years from yonder on the Appian Way. In the same blithe spirit, no doubt, the children of the Campagna chattered with the stranger within their gates, before Rome was, when Etruscans and Latins came down to meet at the ford of Tiber, for purposes of trade.

He has never said so, but I know that in his heart Caterino reckons it among the inscrutable mysteries, of which there are so many in life, that an apparently rational being should be prepared to spend time and money and physical effort in hitting a ball about for several miles, sometimes all by himself, and even in the rain. As a caddie and a junior breadwinner, he appreciates the heaven-sent chance of getting good money for a job that is incomparably jollier than the sort of thing they give him to do at home; but as an heir of the mixed races whose tutelary spirits haunt the Campagna, he knows that, for the wise man, only a very few things in life are worth taking seriously, and hitting a ball with a stick is not one of them. His attitude, though he is not aware of it, is much the same as that of the Chinese mandarin who declined to dance with the French Ambassador's wife, for the reason that he could afford to hire other people to do that sort of thing for his amusement. To Caterino, the Anglo-Saxon's idea of sport is interesting but inexplicable. How, indeed, explain the mind of a man whose means are obviously sufficient to enable him to sit in the sun and smoke and chat, and who nevertheless prefers to walk for hours across rough country, getting very hot, and generally very cross, in the process? Being an Italian, he knows, by virtue of transmitted wisdom, that the only things which really matter to a full-grown man are love and music and money; and if one wants recreation, what can possibly be better than

gambling in the congenial company of one's friends?

A caddie of the Golf Club di Roma receives the princely sum of 3 lire (eightpence, as times go) for the *giro grande* of 18 holes, and by common custom and consent, he gets another 2 lire, provided that his duties have been satisfactorily performed and the clubs properly cleaned. Caterino, as in duty bound, takes the 3 lire home to mother, but before he goes he snatches one glorious half-hour of crowded life, forgathering with his pals in a circle, where tense silence reigns, to play cards for the tips,—a fearful and wonderful game of ancient origin, which the early Christians probably played on dull evenings in the catacombs. My cherub follows me willingly enough in a solitary game against bogy, and chatters merrily the while; but I am well aware that this is not by virtue of any charm of my society, but because of the extra largesse which I give him to compensate for the dulness of the proceedings—largesse which increases his chances of annexing the pool in that sunset game of *tarocco*. As far as golf is concerned, there is no doubt but that he is "earthlier happy" when I play with an adversary in the flesh, and when, trailing gracefully in the rear, he can discuss yesterday's luck, and other really important matters, with Umberto or Cesare.

I would not have it thought that the caddie of the Campagna takes no interest in the royal and ancient game itself. In his hours of ease, when there is nothing better to do, you may often see him practising a very fair imitation of the professional's swing with a club which he has fashioned for himself out of a gnarled vine-root. But because of those unexorcisable Oriental ancestors of his, nothing will ever bring him to regard the game, or those who play it, with the laconic reverence that a Scotsman (or even an American) expects, or to appreciate the necessity for sternly strict observance of its multitudinous rules. Because of the dreadful uncertainty which always exists, especially in the case of strangers, on the subject of the all-important tip, he will do many of the things which an orthodox caddie should do, if he knows that you are not to be trifled with. But with easy-going or absent-minded players, Caterino and his colleagues are apt to become so absorbed in their own affairs, that only a lost ball bestirs them to something like an interest in the game. When we play a foursome, it is their ingenious custom to delegate one of their number to attend to the flag and formalities of the green, while the other three, having duly served out putters to their respective owners, make swiftly for the next tee, and there improve the shining hour by tossing for ha'pence. I have sometimes observed one of these urchins, when caddying

for a Marchesa with an official handicap of 36, relieving the monotony of life by playing a desultory little game of his own in the background. I have even seen one so absorbed in his game that he lofted his ball deftly on to the green, while the dainty lady in question was just preparing to play her fourth putt.

But a lost ball, involving possibilities of additional largesse, moves them, one and all, to whole-hearted activities; also it awakens a sporting instinct of emulation, and provides a welcome break in our dull proceedings. There are two water-hazards at the third hole, close together, one containing thick mud and the second clear water, fairly deep. The retrieving of a ball from either affords Caterino ten minutes of pure enjoyment. When we are in no hurry, I rather enjoy watching him make an ingenious contrivance with a long cleft stick, with which, and much dexterity, he contrives to fish the ball out of five feet of water. Newcomers are sometimes moved to wonder why the Club does not provide one or two landing-nets in the neighbourhood of these waters of bitterness. On one occasion, in the course of a round with the Chargé d'Affaires of the Babylonian Embassy, we were patiently waiting while Caterino and the other caddie stoned my floater into the nearest shallows, and I took occasion to put this question tactfully to my diplomatic friend. He replied that there were no landing-nets for the same reason that there were no sand-boxes —namely, that the thrifty peasants of the Campagna would always gather them in for domestic purposes. In justice to the said peasants, I may say that a few days later a very intelligent-looking Secretary of the Polonial Embassy to the Vatican assured me confidentially that his dear colleague of Babylonia knew nothing about it, and, indeed, very little about anything. As a matter of fact he said, these peasants were good honest souls; the whole trouble lay with the Committee. Whereupon he revealed to me (in strict confidence, of course) several very dreadful things about the Committee, individually and collectively—the same sort of thing that one hears about cosmopolitan Club Committees wheresoever "la carrière" plays its little game of pomps and vanities, from Paris to Petropolis and back again.

Anyway, there is no landing-net, and if there were, I feel certain that Caterino and his little playmates would make away with it speedily as constituting an encroachment on their privileges and a violation of the true golfing spirit, as they conceive it. Also, they would take it because, as snappers-up of unconsidered trifles, these angel-faced *bambinos* of the Campagna are as nimbly light-fingered as any Arab, and as impudently shameless as the ragged urchins of

Southern Ireland. I cannot speak with authority as to the adult Roman peasant's attitude and moral code in the matter of unattached property (though from general observation I should say that the average of simple-minded honesty is quite as high here as in most countries), but I know that I would not tempt Caterino, or any of his fellow-imps, with anything too easy in the way of petty larceny. As regards golf-balls, for example, they have no scruples and no shame whatsoever; one has to count them, *coram publico*, before and after every game. Even a club, if they notice that you do not use it, may take unto itself wings. It did not take Caterino long to observe that a certain cleek of mine was seldom or never requisitioned; it was one of those clubs which, while cordially disliking, one leaves in the bag from force of habit, and because, on a certain memorable occasion, it did wondrous things. Caterino cast eyes of unmistakable covetousness on that club; more than once he hinted gently at the foolishness of burdening oneself with things that had ceased to serve any useful purpose. At last, one day when by favour of the gods I had been playing somewhat above my usually parlous game, and, having defeated a heaven-sent foozler from the Excelsior Hotel, was feeling rather pleased with myself and the world in general, he sidled up alongside as we were coming to the last green, and looking at me with eyes that would have softened the heart of a pawnbroker, said, "Signor, that old club which you never use, will you not give it to me? See how well I have polished all the others. And to-day I have found you two lost balls."

"What would you do with it if I gave it to you, Caterino?"

"Signor, I would practise every evening for an hour, and then, some day, I would become a famous player, like the *maestro*, and give lessons at 30 lire an hour, and so become very rich."

"Far better to be a shepherd, Caterino, and sit in the shade of the olive-trees while the flock graze by the river. Why do you want to be rich?"

Again he gazed at me, and his eyes were as those of the Christian martyr-child that sees the lions coming slowly across the arena.

"I cannot be a farmer, Signor, because I have four elder brothers, and there is not land enough for us all. Father says that I will have to go to Argentina when I grow up. But I would much rather stay here and become a *maestro* of golf and live at Acqua Santa."

Well, he got the club; and at lunch-time I watched him briskly swinging it for the benefit of an envious circle of admirers. Two days later, however, as we were starting for a round, I noticed that another caddie had got it, and was

giving an exhibition of push shots with lumps of mud. To this I drew Caterino's attention. "What," I asked, "is Andrea doing with that club I gave you?"

"Oh," replied my cherub, with an absent-minded expression, "I have lent it to him for an hour. Andrea is my cousin." But he looked uneasy.

At the third hole it was Caterino's turn to go ahead and scout for any ball which might find the water. No sooner was he out of earshot than Cesare, the other caddie, turned to me and spoke winged words.

"Signor," he said, "do not believe Caterino: he is a liar. He sold that club you gave him to Andrea for 15 lire. Caterino only cares for money. He has heaps and heaps of it in the savings-bank, and he always wins at cards."

Anon, more in sorrow than in anger, I pressed Caterino for the truth, and with an eye on Cesare that was anything but seraphic, he admitted the sordid impeachment. But, he said, I had not heard all the facts. It was true that he had sold the club, being in sore need of money, but he had retained the right to practise with it for an hour every evening, and to buy it back some day, when he could afford it again. How could he refuse to sell it when his father was out of work and his mother ill? As he poured forth this eloquent justification of filial piety, Cesare's expressive features registered various shades of emotion, admiration struggling with envy and delicate irony. Later on, when the game was done, clubs cleaned, and tips duly pocketed, the two lads made off together in grim silence for the caddies' stamping-ground, from whence, before long, came sounds of fierce contention and high debate. But the incident ended without bloodshed; for the quarrels of these people, like their narrow streets, remind one forcibly of the far-distant East—a fierce clamour and clash of words which violently threaten, but seldom reach, an ordeal by battle.

At the Golf Club di Roma, even in March, one can usually lunch in the open air, and from the spot where the tables are set, under a little trellised arbour, you can look out across the Campagna and see Alba and Tusculum, gleaming like jewels against the purple velvet of the hills—looking, no doubt, much the same as they did what time the Cæsars dwelt upon the Palatine, or even in the old time before them, when stout Horatius kept the bridge so well. For those who like their golf with a romantic setting and a gently ironic flavour of 'Old Mortality' in the background, I know of no place to compare with these links of Acqua Santa, except it be that apology for a course which sacrilegious foreign devils have laid out between the Yellow Temple and the northern walls of Peking. Here you may bask in the sun at the very gates of

the Eternal City, eating *spaghetti* and drinking good clean wine (at eightpence a pint, mark you), and gaze upon humanity's time-garment, as it were, in the making. Over there, on the right, stretches the Appian Way, splendid monument and silent witness of all the triumphs of Imperial Rome. As one sits here and contemplates from afar its avenue of ruined tombs and shrines of warriors and worthies, whose very names are forgotten, it needs but little imagination to conjure up many a picture and pageant of the past: to fill that stone-paved road with splendid ghosts; to see the conquerors of Carthage, the chariots of the Cæsars and their legions, passing on their flower-strewn way to the Forum; or to see, in place of the posts that carry the telegraph to Albano, that grim line of 1500 crucifixes which made a Roman holiday of Spartacus and his followers. Yonder, where Seneca's tomb still speaks its message to a world that has little or no time for meditation, a cloud of dust marks the passage of Cook's tourist cars on their way to the catacombs. Far out to the left, the pillared arches of Acqua Claudia and Acqua Marcia stretch out towards the Sabine Hills, serene and splendid in their latter end; and high above them, tiny specks against the blue, circle a pair of droning aeroplanes. So clear is the air and so close at hand seem the hills, that one finds oneself almost unconsciously thinking that generations of sculptors and painters have made a good deal too much of that "rape of the Sabines" business; for, at best, it can scarcely have been more than an affair of neighbours—probably of first cousins,—and a summer afternoon's job at that. And, in the same train of thought, what becomes of those gorgeous and bloodthirsty fights between Rome and Tusculum, over which, thanks to Macaulay, we gloated so whole-heartedly in our youth? Seen in this clear noonday light one cannot help wondering how much of that glamour and splendour of panoply was really theirs, and how much of it due to the fine frenzy of the bard. All the same, one would not willingly part with those doughty heroes of the ancient 'Lays,' nor think of Lausulus of Urgo and the great Lord of Luna as fighting village squires with a taste for border raids.

Be all this as it may, we now play golf, and shepherds tend their flocks where, in the brave days of old, Alba and Tusculum and "all the Thirty Cities came forth to war with Rome." But Caterino, heir of all the ages and races of the Campagna, knows more about St Peter and St Cecilia than he does about proud Tarquin, or Appius Claudius, or any of the mighty dead whose spirits hover round the Seven Hills. He has a few vague ideas (probably acquired at the movies) about the gladiators and Christian-

fed lion entertainments of the old-time Colosseum, but I greatly doubt that he has ever heard of Carthage or "that Serpent of Old Nile." He comes of a stock that has always instinctively preferred a live dog to a dead lion, and that would rather know what wine is in the cask than stop to meditate on the Imperial dust which may have stopped its bunghole. Now, as I sit at my ease after lunch, and proceed to light a contemplative pipe, I perceive him, leisurely emerging from behind the caddie-master's hut and looking as if butter would not melt in his mouth. Approaching delicately, he asks me at what time we are going out again. Never was guileless innocence more convincingly writ on any human face; yet I know, and all the expectant circle of his pals, gathered yonder by the fence, knows, that this casual entrance of his is a matter of artistry and the nicest possible timing, contrived to bring him into my presence just ahead of Amelia, the stolid serving-wench, and in time to secure for him certain remnants of bread, fruit, and cheese, on which his eager eyes have been fixed, through the fence, for the last half-hour.

Beyond all question, even for these youngsters, the struggle for life in Italy is a serious business, and it is likely to become much more so for the next generation. The Roman father of to-day asks the question, "What shall we do with our sons?" with just as little prospect of an easy answer to the riddle as any perplexed parent of Putney or Paris or Peking. When the day comes—and it is not far off—when Young Italy is no longer welcome to migrate to America, the question of the nation's daily bread is certain to take on a new and ominous complexion, inasmuch as every year adds hundreds of thousands to the number of mouths to be fed. But whatever may be in store for humanity at large, or for this little world of the Campagna, I am under no apprehension of anxiety as to Caterino's future. He, at all events, will always keep his end up, and be there, or thereabouts, when the cakes and ale are served out.

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD.

THE VICTORIAN AGE—A PARADOX—PHILISTINES AND MEN OF GENIUS—GOING TO THE FIGHT—THE OLD STYLE AND THE NEW—THE CIRCUS AT GENOA—FOREIGN POLICY ON THE HUSTINGS—WHAT MR LLOYD GEORGE BROUGHT BACK.

THE Victorian Age is out of fashion. It is at once too near to (and too remote from) the young Bolsheviks of the press to be justly appreciated by them. The men of genius who are its peculiar glory seem dismoded to the anarchs who write in hopeless competition with them. They are easy marks for the banter of the wits, who do not see that they themselves are expressing a mere passing prejudice. And the misunderstanding is intensified by the fact that, while the political ideals of the Victorian Age are mean and paltry, its artistic ideals, magnificently realised, set it on an equality with the great ages of the world.

The Dean of St Paul's, in his Rede Lecture, delivered lately in Cambridge, hails the age, which many men contemn, as the *sæculum mirabile*, "the most wonderful century in human history." If we look at it from the political point of view, it is difficult to agree with him. In the first place, it was an age of "progress," which measured success by the ledger, and believed that there was a kind of sanctity in a large balance at the bank. While its heroes, the captains of industry, clung to life with the fury of the Benthamites, being assured that without them the great mundane movement could not go on, they were mainly indifferent as to what happened to those whose labour they employed. For the most of them progress was summed up in the doctrine of Manchester. All was for the best in the best possible world, so long as you could buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market. There were two nations, as Disraeli said—the rich and the poor. The hard toil of women and children was the raw material of prosperity, and nothing more. In the fierce competition of industry, it was said by the representatives of Manchester, we should be left behind if we curtailed the hours of labour for the children of England by two hours in the twenty-four. So narrow, in the eyes of the manufacturers, was our margin of safety; so little (they thought) should a prudent benevolence affect the morality of commerce. There in front of your eyes was the hard-and-fast doctrine of political economy, a law of nature which you neglected at your peril.

In the second place, the Victorian age broke sharply with tradition. It made an

end of the happy contentment which had been the Englishman's heritage. It substituted for the quiet prosperity of the countryside the squalid bustle of the town. It set up the plutocrats of the mills as the rivals to the aristocracy, which had been trained for generations to the service of the country, and was ready to face cheerfully whatever sacrifice was expected of it. It was the biggest revolution which had taken place in England since the Reformation; and so noble did progress and prosperity appear in the eyes of those who pursued them that they were ready to condone any enormity which helped them to attain their ends. Thus, in spite of all the fine words that were commonly used about "freedom" of thought and "liberty" of action, the Victorian Age was the age of shoddy and devil's dust.

And from the prosperity of the mill-owners there sprang the great middle class. Suddenly, as by a miracle, the Philistines, as Matthew Arnold called them, came into being. Read 'Culture and Anarchy' and you will see what form and shape they assumed in the eyes of one who was an acute observer and a master of irony. They were not amiable, and they were indisputably vulgar. They confused words with realities, and they hoped to cover up the grossest egoism with soft phrases. They talked glibly of the "dissidence of dissent," and thought (erroneously) that they were the real descendants of Cromwell's Ironsides. They boasted that they might say what they chose, and stoutly maintained that licentious speech was a good in itself. They believed that if we abolished tariffs, all the world would follow our benevolent example, and when the world did nothing of the sort they tamely concealed their disappointment. Nothing was so certain in their eyes as that henceforth war was an impossibility. They esteemed the yard measure a far more powerful weapon than the sword, and when war came they would not confess to themselves that they were deceived. In brief, the middle class, most highly characteristic of the Victorian Age, was not precisely handsome to contemplate; but if it knew little of the graces it engrossed some of the more obvious virtues, and it bequeathed to the country good and wise sons, who have done a vast deal of the country's work ever since, and have turned themselves (without hardship) into a new aristocracy.

Whatever its faults, and they were not few, the Victorian Age was mightily prosperous. The Dean of St Paul's begs us to remember that "the prosperity and security of the happy time were due to temporary causes, which never can recur." We do not share the Dean's apprehension. We do not believe with him that our

advantages are past or passing. "In the nineteenth century," he says, "England was the most fortunately situated country, geographically, in the world." Geographically, England is situated to-day as it was then. The Pacific stage, which the Dean says is now beginning, need not, and (we believe) will not, give the primacy to America. Look at a map, and see on whose side the strength will lie if the Pacific become the centre of universal strife and competition. Where is the supremacy of the United States? To the south of her are Brazil and the Argentine, countries increasing in wealth, who love not the tyranny of the Monroe Doctrine. Her northern boundary is watched by Canada, who has learned in the Great War to be conscious of her military strength. The same lesson has been learned by Australia and New Zealand, the distant outposts of the Empire. And then there remains Japan, still menacing, if she be not given room to expand.

So we do not believe that, when once the Irish question is settled, we shall be worse off, geographically, in the future than we were in the past. The seas do not shift, nor are their shores suddenly submerged. But, according to the Dean of St Paul's, the shifting of the world commerce to the Pacific is not the worst evil that will befall us. "We had a long start," he admits, "over all our rivals, and our possession of great coal-fields and iron-fields close together gave us a still further advantage." This advantage we have not yet lost. Our coal-fields are still there, unexhausted. Our labour will be good again when it has recovered from bad leadership, though it will never be as cheap as once it was. Our manufacturers, we believe, are as "capable and energetic" as ever. There is no reason, therefore, why we should believe with Dean Inge that the Victorian Age was the culminating point of our prosperity. We have borne our share of the war's burden more easily than the other nations who have been engaged in it. The soundness of our exchange is the best proof of our financial solidity. And when we have shaken off the inferior rulers, who to-day are afraid to rule, and who yet refuse to retire from the business of Government, we shall show the world that we did not perish at the close of the Victorian Age, that the shadow of apprehension, if it now lies over everything, will presently be dispelled, and that in the near future it will be "glad confident morning again."

At any rate, we refuse to believe that "America has emerged as the *tertius gaudens*." We cannot discern the signs, which are plain to Dean Inge, that "our work on a grand scale, with the whole world as our stage, is nearing its end." We have come out of the European struggle without

shame and without remorse. We have not failed to meet our responsibilities or to respond to the call of patriotism. When the betrayers of our Empire are no longer at the head of affairs, when the dishonour of Ireland is effaced from our records, when some years of resolute Government have convinced us that it is not an essentially British trait to desert our friends for our enemies, the prestige, which was ours of old and which we increased during the war, will return to us undiminished. Man does not live by bread alone; and bankrupt though she be for the moment, Europe is still the mother of the arts. What has America to offer us which shall satisfy our craving for beauty? It is to France and to England that the new world must turn for encouragement in the things of the mind. In Europe alone is there still a surviving and enduring tradition of literature. Where the treasure is there shall the soul of man be also, and we shall not believe in America as a *tertius gaudens* until she show herself independent of our example and our inspiration.

Thus we come to the paradox of the Victorian Age. The years in which the middle class, in its eager desire of wealth, thought it no shame to sand the sugar or to water the milk, when there seemed a certain virtue in shoddy, if only it found a quick market, were made illustrious by great writers of prose and verse, by the painters of great pictures. Between the dark side of this baffling age and the light side there is no necessary connection. Men of genius are the happy accidents of time. They are born as chance and destiny decide. We know not whence they come nor why. When to our joy they smile upon us, they do not bow to, they defy, their surroundings. What had Tennyson and Dickens and the Brontës to do with the Philistines who were all about them? What was the chain which bound the young Millais and Walker and Mason to the grasping mill-owners of Manchester? There was no chain. It was not the age that was illustrious. The men who conferred honour upon it seemed the straylings from another world.

In spite of their obvious diversity, the men of the Victorian Age had this quality in common: they were all men of large utterance. They had much to say, and they said it at length. They were architects, not jewellers. They did not break themselves up into coteries nor dwell in *cénacles*. There were few touches of smallness about them, either in speech or thought. Their chief fault was a proneness to rhetoric, a proneness which lessened the force of Carlyle and rendered the preaching of Ruskin very often of no effect. Dean Inge thinks that Tennyson was "the grandest and most fully representative figure in all Victorian litera-

ture." Great as Tennyson was, intimately as he belongs to the noble tradition of English poetry, it is still Dickens who should give a name to his age, as Shakespeare has done to the heroic age of Elizabeth. For it was fiction which was the peculiar glory of the time, and in fiction Dickens was the master of them all. He looked upon what lay about him with the eyes of freshness and discovery. Though he painted his own world, like the artist that he was, he painted it in such colours as had escaped the vision of his contemporaries, and he peopled it with men and women who transcended the fancy and experience of all save himself. He wrote of all things; he is universal as Homer is universal; and his style, perfectly adapted to its purpose, rose ever with the occasion. The speech of Mrs Gamp, for instance, is epic in its grandeur; and who is there who would willingly miss a word or a cadence in the wise discourse of Crummles or of Mr Micawber?

And those who, without coming under Dickens' immediate influence, helped him in the work of carrying on the great tradition, were not unworthy to stand at his side. Thackeray is of the number, and Anthony Trollope, who at last is finding his proper place in the hierarchy, and Disraeli, and Charlotte and Emily Brontë; and lastly, Meredith and Thomas Hardy, stout Victorians both of them. These are noble links in the chain which binds us to the past of Richardson and Fielding. And as yet we see not clearly what other links are being added to the imperishable chain.

Meanwhile, Dean Inge is not hopeful even about the future of our English fiction. Nor, indeed, are we. He is not certain who shall take the torch from the hands of Meredith and Hardy, and hand it on to followers worthy of their example. In a passage, characteristically "Victorian" in the bad sense of the word, Dean Inge utters a warning against foreign influence. "Our nation has a great tradition in fiction," says he, "and we shall be wise to stick to it, instead of preferring a corrupt following of the French, whose novelists, in spite of their clever technique, seem to me frequently dull and usually repulsive." A confused statement surely! It is lack of technique from which our modern writers suffer, and if only they could learn their business to better purpose, it wouldn't matter where they went to school. And who are the French novelists who are "dull" and "repulsive"? Not Balzac and Stendhal, we hope, who remain the two great masters on either side the Channel. Nor need we trouble ourselves about the obscure, yet popular, writers, who "have to their discredit over a hundred works of fiction apiece." They are the inevitable camp-followers. They clung about

the skirts of Dickens and Thackeray as industriously as to-day they hold on to the garment-edges of Henry James and Conrad and Thomas Hardy. They matter not. Only in name do they pursue the same craft as he pursued who wrote 'Great Expectations,' and conferred glory upon the Victorian Age.

There is one "institution" which was bequeathed to us by the Regency, and which the Victorian Age, in an access of morality, utterly abolished—the Prize Ring. In 1860 Sayers fought Heenan, and the champions of Sayers, fearing defeat, cut the ropes and stopped the fight. The two heroes fought, we are told, in the presence of "poets, clergymen, men of letters, and members of both Houses of Parliament." Even Thackeray, in a sentimental mood, could not but praise the English champion. "If I were absolute king," said he, "I would send Tom Sayers to the mill for a month, and make him Sir Thomas on coming out of Clerkenwell." That is written in the proper spirit, a spirit which has been revived—with a vast difference—in these Georgian days.

We all know the rôle which the Ring played of old. It was a part of our life and thought. Its patrons were the most eminent men in the land. Such statesmen as Wellington and Castlereagh and Windham followed the contests of the Fancy as closely as they followed the strife of foreign courts. Kean did not disdain to borrow his effect in "Richard III." from the last efforts of Painter in his fight with Oliver. "He fought," says Hazlitt, describing in one phrase both Painter and Kean, "as one drunk with wounds." We have all of us heard of Byron's friendship with Gentleman Jackson; we remember the famous sonnet upon the Nonpareil—"good with both hands and only ten stone four"; we recall with pleasure Borrow's rhapsody about Tom Spring. And then we regard the Ring as it is to-day, and wonder if our champions are playing the same game as was played before select audiences by the champions of a hundred years ago.

We went some weeks ago to the widely advertised fight between Georges Carpentier and Kid Lewis. Its approach was heralded by learned articles in the press. The largest building in London was taken for its proper display. The method of admitting and seating a vast mob of spectators was said to be a triumph of organisation. The pomp and glory of the combatants were beyond everything that Randall or Turner or Belcher ever dreamed. Had those worthies lain upon the enchanted couch of Christopher Sly, they could not have dreamed of such marvels. The modern fighters live and fight in a luxury which would have been strange indeed to their predecessors. Jack Randall, the noblest of his kind, gazed upon

the world through a mist of "blue ruin" in a public-house in Chancery Lane. His successors ride to the scene of the encounter in expensive cars, and know that, whether they win or lose, they will gain a pot of money, and will dispose, at their own figure, of such things, before unheard of, as cinema rights and photographic royalties, and all the rest of it.

Before we set out upon our journey to Olympia, we took down from our bookshelf Hazlitt's famous essay on the fight between Bill Neate and the Gasman. It is a lively story of adventure. Hazlitt went by the Bath Mail as far as Newbury, slept there the night, and tramped nine miles to Hungerford the next morning. As he went he discoursed amply and pleasantly about the whole duty of pugilists. He demanded that magnanimity and bravery should be inseparable, and deplored the impudence of the Gasman. "Modesty," said he, "should accompany the Fancy as its shadow. The best men were always the best behaved. Jem Belcher, the Game Chicken (before whom the Gasman could not have lived), were civil, silent men. So is Cribb, so is Tom Belcher, the most elegant of sparrers, and not a man for every one to take by the nose." And then Hazlitt eloquently describes the fight, and celebrates the victory of Bill Neate, "until the carrier-pigeons mounted into the air, and one of them flew with the news of her husband's victory to the bosom of Mrs Neate. Alas, for Mrs Hickman."

As you read Hazlitt's account, as you read the other stories of well-recorded fights, you understand in a moment the superiority of the ancient practice. Time was when the fighting was out of doors, with the wind blowing on the heath, when the stakes were driven in upon as level a piece of ground as chance put in your way. We have made a different game of it, by shutting it up in an immense building, and by hedging it round with telegraphers and photographers and wireless operators, and all those strange personages, who remind us that the world outside cannot wait for its news until the morrow, and must keep a pictured record for ever of all that happens within the compass of Olympia. Thus is achieved the death of romance; thus is a noble sport converted into the most profitable of businesses.

Hazlitt went to Hungerford partly by the mail, partly upon his own ten toes. There was only one possible way of reaching Olympia, and that was by motor. To such an adventure —well organised and financially sound—you could not travel otherwise than by petrol. To walk thither would be doing too much honour to what is called in America a "business proposition." You find your way to your seat without difficulty, despite the crowds, because the whole performance is conducted exactly according to a well-arranged system. Your first impression is that the little square

within which the heroes fight is strangely out of proportion to the immensity of the environing hall. It is as though a single square of a chessboard were laid upon a cricket-pitch. The fight, between two heroes not yet famous, which was in progress when we entered, inspired but a languid curiosity in the minds of men, restlessly moving in their seats until the great moment should arrive. Now and again there is a flutter of excitement as this great man or that enters the building. And then at last the true ceremonial begins. A gentleman with a megaphone, set hideously to his lips, announces the arrival of Kid Lewis, who takes his place in his corner, enveloped in a golden dressing-gown. The renowned Carpentier, with the modesty which befits grandeur, climbs into the ring almost unobserved. His dressing-gown, like his preliminary gestures, is subdued in effect. No sooner, however, does he stand in the ring, and look superbly about him, than you know yourself in the presence of the great. This knowledge is intensified when a lithe and elegant man climbs up under the ropes into the ring. The megaphone announces him, in all simplicity, as though he were merely a human being, as "Jack Dempsey, the Champion Heavy-Weight of the world." It is a moment of high privilege, which we are unlikely to forget. To have gazed for an instant upon so august a champion, a champion whose glory and honour are in the mouths of all men, is not to have lived wholly in vain. Meanwhile, Carpentier, by a sort of ritual, has the fastening of his gloves looked to, and after another champion has gathered some of the applause which was lavished upon Dempsey, the ring is cleared of all but the combatants and the referee. The scrap begins. Kid Lewis seems desirous of getting as close to Carpentier as possible. There is a vast deal of butting and jabbing. The busiest man of the three is the referee, who alternately urges the fighters to "break," or attempts, as well as he can, to separate them. Then suddenly, while Kid Lewis appears to be attending to the referee's admonitions, Carpentier shoots out his right, and all is over. What it meant we do not know, nor did Jack Dempsey's impassioned prose, which was duly set forth in the newspaper the next morning, help to enlighten us. The fight had lasted some two minutes, and despite the compensation afforded by the gravity of the spectacle, our sad reflection was that perhaps it was hardly worth while to come so far to see so little.

A similar reflection, we imagine, perturbs the sanguine mind of Mr Lloyd George. He has been all the way to Genoa, and returns with far less than he expected. We have been told a thousand times that he went thither to bring something back. The more probable conjecture is

that he went to Genoa to gather a handful of sand to throw in the eyes of the electors at home. Whatever the purpose was it seems to have failed, and he has given us nothing but a memory of unbridled speech wherewith to console ourselves.

But even the adventure of Genoa will not be vain if it serves as a warning to other demagogues. Comines, that wise man, said that the heads of States should meet only in their pleasures. With equal truth may it be asserted that Prime Ministers of neighbouring countries should consort, one with another, only upon a golf-course. Mr Lloyd George, indeed, when he initiated a discussion at Genoa upon nothing in particular, set an evil fashion. He dragged the delicate problems of foreign policy on to the hustings. He delivered electioneering speeches—he can deliver no others—before the assembled nations. He assured the French that the party to which he belonged—the Coalition—was the one and only party in England which professed a sympathy for France—a statement at once untrue and improper. Thereafter he quarrelled in public and browbeat his assailants. At all costs he would not go away empty-handed. To-day it was France who was jeopardising the peace of Europe. Yesterday it was Russia, whose extravagant demands were making agreement impossible. And while France was always roughly handled if she dared to have a mind and a policy of her own, the dignity of M. Chicherin's top-hat demanded and received Mr Lloyd George's tenderest consideration.

And while the great man himself adopted upon foreign soil the manners and methods of the demagogue, his press, obedient on week-days, slavishly obsequious on Sundays, treated the ministers of great and friendly states as though they were political opponents at a by-election. We have never seen so shameful an orgy of abuse as was practised at the expense of France in the Sunday press. Truly it might have shamed even these chivalrous knights of the pen that the irrelevent Conference was broken up at last by the foolish demands of Russia, not by what they denounced daily and weekly as the sheer wickedness of France. It did not shame them in the least. They were as noisy as ever in belabouring our great and friendly neighbour after Russia had presented her impossible terms as they had been before.

The unanimity of the press, which fought the battle for Mr Lloyd George, proves how strong was its lead, how clear its inspiration. Here is one gentleman proclaiming, in headlines, that the real issue at Genoa was salvation or ruin for Europe, and that French militarism was the danger. Impudent nonsense! And this same eminent critic of foreign affairs proceeds to assure us, with touching urbanity, that

"the breakdown of the French policy of repression is patent to all men," that "equally patent is the life-and-death interest of British well-being in its abandonment"; and then he asks, in a rhetorical conclusion, "Can we afford any longer to carry France on our backs? Can we afford to continue supporting and countenancing her in courses which we know to be fatal to the peace and prosperity of Europe?"

For this writer treaties are but scraps of paper, and he demands a drastic revision of the settlement of Versailles, whose "provisions, and, still more, the spirit behind them," he says, "have operated disastrously for all British industrial interests." There was a time when we deemed it our first duty to keep our word, to hold ourselves bound in honour to respect the signatures of our representatives. But in the new method of diplomacy our pledged word and our honour must give way to "British industrial interests," and thus we are earning, what we never deserved before, the title of a nation of shopkeepers. Another special correspondent puts the same bright thoughts in less chastened style. He boldly describes M. Poincaré as Nero. And this is how he throws the customary insults at the head of France: "Listen to the two exponents at work. Mr Lloyd George's speeches are passionate pleas for the end of brute force and the carnage of the sword, with mutual co-operation as the basis of international agreement. When M. Poincaré talks he waves the treaty at perishing Europe much as Nero fiddled at burning Rome. He may keep his treaty as Nero kept his fiddle; but a treaty without peace is like a fiddle without Rome—what avails it?" Perhaps these are not the proper terms in which an English journalist should address the Prime Minister of France. Nor do we gather from the writer's hectic prose how it is that, if Europe is perishing because the Bolsheviks have chosen deliberately to destroy Russia's power of production, the blame should be thrown upon the blameless backs of France and of M. Poincaré.

While France was the whipping-boy of the Conference, there is no doubt that in the eyes of Mr Lloyd George and his pack the Russians were its heroes. They cast a glamour of blood and crime upon the meeting. Mr Lloyd George saw in their co-operation the old dream of Prinkipo come true. He could compare, if he would, the Russian murderer with his Irish brother. He will end by being an expert in the criminals whom he was once resolute (or said he was) to take by the throat, and whom he now prefers to take by the hand. Surely the spectacle of M. Chicherin, wearing a blood-red badge in his coat and walking nonchalantly on the deck of a royal yacht, must have delighted the ama-

teurs. One excited journalist, after an evening spent with the men who have destroyed a nation, declared that it was the most interesting evening in a life not devoid of interest. Had he wished to meet them, he might have met them in the ghetto of East London years ago, and the privilege might then have been heightened by the presence of that eminent statesman, Peter the Painter. But in those days the victims of their wrath were not counted by the hundred thousand, and the admiration, which seems to be inspired by murder executed on a vast scale, would have been dimmer than it is to-day.

The great end of the Conference at Genoa was not an end of peace or of construction. It was an end of destruction and of war. "The Entente is dead," announced Mr Garvin, "and M. Poincaré has killed it." M. Poincaré has killed it, if indeed it is dead, by refusing to do homage to Mr Lloyd George and the 'Observer.' The wish no doubt is father to the thought, and since Great Britain is not solely inhabited by the Irish and the Welsh, we are confident that the Entente will not be dissolved just yet. But as many garrulous politicians are bent on its dissolution, it may be worth while to consider what that dissolution would mean. We are bound to France by all the ties of honour and comradeship. Side by side we fought the Germans, and our dead share common graves in the fields of France. One aim was set before us then, and one ambition. As in war we were not divided, so in peace we set our hands loyally to the same treaties. That these treaties should be kept is of far greater importance to France than to Britain. It was part of Germany's settled policy to destroy the industries of France, that by this simple method she might remove a commercial rival from her path. It is still the pious, if tragic, duty of France to restore the towns which the enemy levelled with the ground, and to replace the machinery which the Huns either stole or broke in pieces. These tasks can be performed only if the Germans are faithful to the pledges which they gave of reparation. If we preferred that the Germans should go back on the promises which they made to France, in order to foster "British industrial interests," and consented to smash at one blow the Entente and the Treaty of Versailles, then should we be branded as traitors for ever. And that is the course of action which the "economists" and the insulters of M. Poincaré seem to favour. Is it strange, then, that the French should be apprehensive of the future?

But in spite of all the nonsense that has been written and spoken at Genoa, France will be reassured. She knows well that there is a sharp division between honest Englishmen and the politicians, who in speech and upon paper have insulted

her. To go back upon our friends and to aid and abet our enemies and the enemies of our friends is not a settled trait in the British. For the moment a bad habit seems to prevail, but it will pass with a change of Government, and we shall be found fighting at France's side for those things which alone will keep civilisation alive. Commerce is not the only reputable pursuit of mankind. There are other and better wisdoms than the pedantry of economists. France and England have for centuries followed the arts together in sympathy and understanding. We have exchanged influences; we have incurred and repaid intellectual debts. And the foolish demagogues and journalists, who for the moment seem to prefer the friendship of the blood-stained Russians, cynical in the repudiation of their obligations and in the denial of the existence of private property, to an honourable alliance with the French, our ancient comrades in arts and in arms, will speedily be pushed from the places they hold to-day, and be forgotten.

So Genoa comes to an end, and we are promised a speedy renewal of the Conference at the Hague. We are not told why the Hague has been chosen for a fresh bout of the new diplomacy. Perhaps it is that Mr Lloyd George has never visited that engaging capital, and wishes to study on the spot the masterpieces of Vermeer and Rembrandt. The best that we can hope is that the meeting will not take place. If it do, we know that the excited journalists will once more unsheath their pens, and the politicians will again attack the representatives of France from the hustings. In the meantime Mr Lloyd George's travelling circus has had a stern rebuff. The United States Government likes the Hague no better than it liked Genoa; and "though it is reluctant to abstain from any opportunity of helpfulness," thinks that it cannot "helpfully participate in the meeting at the Hague." It discerns clearly that the Hague is but Genoa under another name, and that it would present the same difficulties which Genoa failed to solve. "The inescapable and ultimate question," replies the United States Government to the unwelcome invitation, "would appear to be the restoration of productivity in Russia, the essential conditions of which are still to be secured, and must in the nature of things be provided within Russia herself." There, indeed, is the solution of the problem. We want no more conferences. The countries of Europe must find their own way back to prosperity. The interference of amateurs will do them no good. For the rest we must loyally keep the engagements which we have made with our allies, and of which the foremost is the Entente, existing and destined to exist between Great Britain and France.

TO A GENOESE TUNE.

BY ALAN BOTT.

THE arbiter of moods in Genoa is the sun. Four days out of seven it irradiates the streets, the gardens, the quayside, and the temperament of the people with warm dry gladness. It brilliantly shimmers upon the palm-fronds, upon the white and black façade of the cathedral, upon the fountains, upon the white bandoliers of the carabinieri. On such days during the Conference every small or large transaction—the buying of a newspaper, the interchange of conflicting opinions between two Premiers — was tempered by smiles and friendly intonations. It was as a rule on such days that the more apparent discords in the concert of Europe were blended into improvised harmonies, which evoked applause from dispassionate sections of the audiences as well as from the professional *claques*.

There are also times when the atmosphere is damp and muggy beneath a vague sky that dribbles depressing showers every hour or so. The palms are dull and drooping; raindrops from overhanging roofs drip unpleasantly upon the very centre of narrow roadways. On such days the dictatorial manner of the policemen when they ordered passers-by to make way for a Conference car was near the border-line of discourtesy; the conferenciers drove to the Royal Palace with nerves jangled by reaction from the stimulating atmosphere of yesterday. More often than not, it was on such days that politics and events grouped themselves into a menacing crisis, that recriminations and protests were bandied about, that predictions of failure were telegraphed to twenty capitals.

As for the Genoese, the barometrical readings of "set fair" and "rain" meant much more to them on the literal than on the metaphorical plane. They accustomed themselves to the overcrowding and to the traffic jams in the Via Balbi, through which dozens of Conference cars drove twice a day to the Royal Palace; but for the rest they merely tolerated the multitudinous strangers in their midst, and declined to allow "the greatest gathering in the world's history" to intrude upon the habits and traditions of their daily round. Even statesmen's ladies, when visiting the Cathedral, were excluded from the Chapel of St John the Baptist; for, said the priest, "No woman may enter here on pain of excommunication, because it was a woman who betrayed the saint." And when the café loungers in the tortuous streets before the port opened their evening papers,

they hastily turned from the front pages, whereon the latest crises and recriminations were recounted, to the list of drawings in the State or Municipal lotteries.

So much for the background of the most fantastic Russian ballet ever staged. Here are a few impressions of its scenes, up to the beginning of the last Act.

. . . . . .

The Villa d'Albertis is halfway up a hill-slope behind the sea-shore of Quarto dei Mille, whence Garibaldi's thousand red-shirts sailed to their splendid adventure in Sicily. Olive groves rise in tiered undulations above the house, and below it orange groves and a quarter-acre of flower-beds border the pathway to its roadside gate of wrought iron.

Standing on a balcony and looking northwards across the yellow-splashed grounds, Mr Lloyd George might well have thought, on the morning of Palm Sunday, "L'Europe c'est moi." The envoys of more nations than had ever before been represented at any Conference had just arrived in the city beyond the curveting bay; and his was the summoning that had called them together.

All of the delegations were requesting personal interviews with him; two-thirds of them were thrilling to the currents of electric idealism with which he had magnetised a continent, even if their conception of how this electricity might be applied were vague and irresolute. Two thousand people from thirty-four countries were to assemble next day in an unparalleled gathering; and his was the voice that they were most eager to hear.

Southward instead of northward from the balcony, however, was a prospective Talleyrand to "The Leader of Europe's" prospective Metternich in this Congress of Genoa. From Santa Margharita, twelve miles away, M. Tchitcherine, also, had asked for a personal interview with the British Premier; but if there was idealism among the Russians in the Hôtel Impérial, its inspiration was far other than that contained in Mr Lloyd George's post-Cannes programme.

"We are here because Europe needs us." That was the burden of Mr Lloyd George's Palm Sunday utterances. But when, on the preceding day, I had driven along the rocky cliff-side road to Santa Margharita, and had talked with M. Tchitcherine, the most notable words he used were, "We are here because Europe cannot do without us."

There was a significant difference between the two points of view, whatever degree of sincerity may have been behind each. There was a difference quite as marked between the settings in which they were expressed. Mr Lloyd George, with his political luncheons and his garden-city secretariat, had brought with him the purposeful monotones of Downing Street; whereas M. Tchitcherine had introduced

into Santa Margharita the fantastic flamboyancy incident to Russia of the Soviets.

Four carabinieri, theatrically resplendent from the top of their cocked cockaded hats to the bottom edge of their trouser-stripes, stood in line before the outer gates. One of these took my credentials in his white-gloved hands, and passed them to one of several Italian detectives, who passed them to a cloth-capped member of the Russian police. The illusion of being behind the scenes of a comic opera in rehearsal was heightened when, having climbed twelve broad steps of grey marble, flanked by palm-pots and more carabinieri, I joined a "chorus of secretaries, journalists, detectives, &c.," before the lobby. To the right M. Litvinoff, looking like a florid cherub in a baggy lounge suit, was being filmed on the lawn. To the left, a Russian girl with shock hair was typing in the shade of some vivid-blossoming mimosa. At the top on the steps, a delegate from the Caucasus, seated in the open at a garden table, wore a heavy sheepskin hat amid eighty degrees of heat, while sipping his tea and lemon. The chief and subchief of the delegation's Russian police—both of them tousle-bearded—arrived suddenly from behind some shrubbery, talked with the secretary, who had the visitors' names, eyed us up and down, nodded, and entered the hotel. MM. Joffe and Krassin came through the swing-doors together, looking so aggressively neat and so pleased with themselves that one almost expected them to begin a double-turn song and dance.

Herr Rosenberg, the laconic little Semite who was M. Tchitcherine's organiser of publicity, took me upstairs to his bedroom, together with three other special correspondents. There he opened a trunk, revealing shirts and silk pyjamas in a tray on the one side, and in a recess on the other a pile of typewritten sheets. He handed one of the sheets, amplified its exposition of how the delegation represented not only Communists but also Minimalists and the converted intelligentsia, and disappeared to ask whether M. Tchitcherine would receive the representatives of the four most consistently anti-Bolshevist journals in London.

M. Tchitcherine would and did. He received us half an hour before midnight, in an enormous ornate room whence one could see, through velvet-hung windows, the lights of two tiny towns glittering in haphazard clusters between the moon-luminous sea-shore and the Punto di Portofino's darkly-shadowed promontory. Sitting between Herr Rosenberg on one side of him and a crop-haired detective on the other, he leaned forward over the carved table, his attenuated fox-like face enigmatically impassive, except for the movements of his red beard as he talked in thin and fluty accents

of how the world had misunderstood Bolshevism, and how anxious he was for friendly co-operation on terms of equality between Russia and the West. The full purport of the persuasive generalities he expressed during half an hour of question and answer was summed up, however, in the one sentence, "We are here because Europe cannot do without us."

. . . . . .

The collective idealism of, "We are here because Europe needs us," held the field for just four days.

It dominated the first plenary session in the Palazzo di San Giorgio, for all that a thousand troops—cavalry, feather-plumed bersaglieri, and a green half-battalion of the Guardia-Regia—had assembled to line the way for the frock-coated men of peace. Inside the Palazzo, it found expression in the applause for Mr Lloyd George's exposition, made with theatrically appealing gesture, of the world's economic unity, and for his condemnation of international "snarling." It was echoed rather more faintly by M. Barthou's polished phrases. It was rotundly echoed in the German Chancellor's speech, delivered with the unctuous manner of a Birmingham draper addressing an evangelical meeting during his holidays at Yarmouth.

The emotional tension incident to these fine aspirations brought many among the audience to the frontier of hysteria. All over the hall there was a sharp intake of the breath when M. Tchitcherine rose, and a whispering like the sibilant escape of steam from a safety-valve, "*Chee-che-reen.*" Even his unpleasing nasal voice—he pipes his words like a Punch-and-Judy showman, and when talking French, pronounces "-ent" as "*-ung*," and "ont" as "*oung*"—could not induce anti-climax, for the words themselves were even more perfervid in their idealism than those of Mr Lloyd George. He soared above the tonic atmosphere of economic brotherhood into the perilous but still more inspiring altitude of disarmament. There could be no doubt but that a majority of the delegates were entranced by this adventure, despite M. Barthou's forceful veto upon this flight over forbidden territory, despite Mr Lloyd George's avuncular reproof.

And despite M. Tchitcherine's disclaimer of discordant intention, he had planted his first Talleyrandian shaft in the bosom of collective harmony.

Why, with the limits imposed by the Cannes agenda tabulated in clear print on the table before him, did M. Tchitcherine introduce the topic upon which M. Poincaré had placed a taboo, in the which, as he well knew, Mr Lloyd George and Signor Schanzer had acquiesced only half-heartedly? There were not many who could answer this question at the time. Among those who may well have guessed the

reason was an ecclesiastic, in scarlet cloak and scarlet skull-cap, who sat at the extreme right of the statesmen's ladies, in the first row of spectators. The Vatican was not officially represented; but the Vatican was watching through the eyes of the Archbishop of Genoa—eyes which had read Jesuit history with complete understanding. The scarlet cloak typified a force that was to make itself felt more than a little before the next four crowded weeks were over. So, also, did the gold-rimmed spectacles of certain observers who were unofficially watching on behalf of American "Big Business"; but the wearers of these had not read Jesuit history, and as yet drew no inferences from the Tchitcherine-Barthou incident at the opening session.

Meanwhile, despite the further darts of discord cast by M. Tchitcherine in the political sub-commission which was examining the possible basis of a European Treaty with Russia, collective idealism persisted for three more days—until its own prophet himself destroyed its power by means of a supremely tactless blunder. That blunder was the transfer by Mr Lloyd George of the political sub-commission's functions to a new Supreme Council, which lunched and bargained in his private villa, and from which twenty-nine of the thirty-four nations were excluded.

. . . . . .

Lord Riddell, that pioneer of Conference "explanation," somehow missed his cue when he was expected in Genoa. In his place there appeared a capable understudy in the person of Sir Edward Grigg, one of the Premier's secretaries. Twice a day Sir Edward "explained" to journalists the proceedings of the commissions. Usually, his expositions were compounded in the ratio of one-half facts, one-quarter inferences, and one-quarter the view-points of the 'Lloyd George Magazine.' During the four days of private consultation in the Villa d'Albertis between the British, French, Italian, Belgian, and Russian spokesmen, the ingredients were altered to two-fifths inference, two-fifths the 'Lloyd George Magazine,' and only one-fifth facts. We were told that, starting from the memorandum prepared in London by Allied experts, the self-appointed Committee was slowly travelling towards an agreement on broad principles. The rest was implication and propaganda. The implication was that M. Barthou was obstructing the adoption of modifications which might be acceptable to M. Tchitcherine, and that M. Tchitcherine was sidetracking progress through argumentative intransigeance. The propaganda was that Mr Lloyd George was conciliating with M. Barthou and M. Tchitcherine so effectively that before long he would be able to submit the basis of an accord to the political sub-commission.

What exactly was accom-

plished in the villa reunions has not yet been given to history; but at a private dinner-party I heard a non-British delegate refer to the meeting he had attended that afternoon as "an interchange of opposite positives which combined into a negative." And he proceeded to describe a part of what had happened:—

"There was something almost Shakespearian in the arguments of Lloyd George and Tchitcherine, because, behind their words, we sensed the tremendous drama in which we are all still involved, and which has cost life and happiness to so many.

"'Think,' declaimed Tchitcherine, 'of all that Russia has suffered, of all that she still suffers. You believe that you have much to claim from us; but if our prostration caused us to withdraw from the war in 1917, have you not made us pay for it abundantly in taking from us the Baltic States, Poland, and Bessarabia, and in fighting us and starving us for three years? Whereas, if we had continued to fight by your side you would have promised us Constantinople, Austria, and German Poland—a new empire, in fact.'

"Lloyd George, in reply, upheld the right of every country, in face of a revolution in a neighbouring country, to support the party to which it was naturally allied.

"'For a long while,' he said, 'France supported the Stuarts. But we did not claim anything because of that. England was in conflict with the French Revolution and the French Empire. But the succeeding régimes did not ask any indemnity of her.'

"And he proceeded to paint a convincing picture of what the Russian deception had cost the Allies. Litvinoff had become very red. Krassin, near an open window, was voluptuously inhaling the perfumes from the garden outside.

"There came a moment when Lloyd George showed signs of lassitude. Clearly, he was tired of arguing, because quite as clearly his phrases did not have their roots in sincere conviction. Such moments are dangerous for him, because they incline him toward easy concessions. But clear reason and logic quickly reinvigorated the languid atmosphere when Barthou began to speak. He placed before the Bolshevists the certainty that they would obtain no financial aid in the future if they refused to accept without reserve their country's debts in the past.

"When the meeting ended we had advanced but little from the point at which we had begun; but we had experienced the impression that imponderable forces, psychic and subtle, had intruded into the debate."

But whatever the positives or negatives of the Villa d'Albertis conclaves may have been, their indirect effect on the rest of the Conference was infinitely more important. As

twenty-four hours succeeded twenty-four hours, and still the unofficial Supreme Council continued to meet behind closed doors, the resentment of the excluded nations swelled into rancour. Idealism vanished, to be replaced by a hundred and one national jealousies and self-interests. Cabals were formed among the lesser delegations from Eastern Europe. The Western neutrals drew up a protest against Supreme Council diplomacy when the initial watchwords had been "an equal footing for all."

All of which suited the Talleyrand policy of M. Tchitcherine vastly well. When not bargaining in the villa, he and M. Litvinoff and M. Krassin found time to stimulate the rancour of the excluded Premiers and Foreign Ministers. There were private luncheons and visits, during which one or other of them talked of the advantage to both sides of a special co-operation between Russia and this or that neighbouring country. The vague outlines of half a dozen separate treaties floated into the Conference atmosphere.

One of these sinister wraiths hovered unseen above a vivid function on the Saturday before Easter — a function which, for all who were present, was made unforgettable by its dramatic aftermath. In the afternoon Herr Wolff, Director and Editor of the 'Berliner Tageblatt,' held a political reception in the gardens of a Nervi villa. There, as we stood on a wide lawn amid palms and splendid flower-beds and bright-flashing fountains, Dr Rathenau addressed us in lucid English.

Earlier, Mr Maynard Keynes (speaking on behalf of the author of 'The Economic Consequences of the Peace') had talked reparations, reiterating the above-mentioned author's contention that Germany could not be expected to remain in economic bondage for half a century while striving to pay impossible sums. Dr Rathenau, in the soft persuasive voice habitual to that blend of the hair-splitting metaphysician and the purposeful materialist, deprecated the inference that Germany was not anxious to redeem her tremendous obligations. She would do her honest utmost; but the only means of making this utmost effective was an international loan—say, three and a half millions of gold marks—to tide over her present financial depression. He ended with a plea for full reconciliation and co-operation, a plea so convincingly eloquent that, when they left the garden in the moon-shimmering twilight, many of his hearers were convinced that here was a fine and sincere thinker.

A few hours later Dr Rathenau drove to Santa Margharita, and flagrantly violated the principles underlying the Genoa conference by signing the separate pact between Germany and Russia.

. . . . . .

"The Soviet delegates are to avoid, if possible, the con-

clusion of any agreement with the powers represented at Genoa *en bloc;* or with any more or less considerable group of powers . . .

"The Soviet representatives are to conduct separate, quite independent negotiations with individual Governments, promising each country, in return for official recognition of the Soviet régime, special provisions, both as regards industrial concessions and exclusive rights and guarantees for the nationals of each given country.

"In the course of these private negotiations, each country is to be told separately that Soviet Russia is primarily interested in the resumption of normal relations with the nation in question, and hopes that its representatives will in return support Russia's claims. . . .

"These suggestions are to be made use of very lavishly in all private negotiations, in order to sow discord among the various nations represented, and particularly in order to create animosity and rivalry in connection with the distribution of concessions for the exploitation of oil-fields, coal-mines, and forests."—'Morning Post,' 4th April 1922.

I do not know what were the "reliable sources" whence the 'Morning Post' obtained these "confidential instructions from the All-Russian Soviet Executive to the Russian Delegates to Genoa," but events have confirmed the information in every detail. Indeed, after the Pact of Rapallo, the Bolshevist Delegation declared openly that its Treaty with Germany was intended to be merely the first of a series of similar accords with other Powers.

This revelation was made repeatedly by M. Tchitcherine and M. Litvinoff, but most often it was made by M. Rakowsky, the delegation's chief propagandist as well as its comedian. Every day he held a public meeting in the hotel bedroom occupied by Herr Rosenberg, the latter's bed being shut off from the bourgeois view by an enormous screen, patterned with gilt peacocks and enamelled flowers. Looking up from time to time at the ceiling, whereon painted angels hovered over painted clouds, M. Rakowsky talked of the debts which Russia could not and would not pay, of the harm done to Russia by the Allied blockade and by Allied support of Monarchist adventures, and of the precepts of nationalisation, which no amount of outside pressure could induce Russia to forgo. He made the Frenchmen who were present furious by everlastingly drawing parallels between the French and Russian Revolutions: as when he sought to prove the impossibility of restoring their former property to Russian émigrés by pointing out that Louis XVIII. had been unable to make any such restoration in the case of émigrés who returned to France after Waterloo.

Each afternoon this Rumanian agitator of Bulgarian origin, who had become Russian Commissar for the Ukraine, delivered exquisitely ironical homilies on the good faith and pure intentions of the Soviet Directorate. It would have been quite in keeping with the evangelical fervour of these homilies if the angels on the ceiling of Herr Rosenberg's bedroom had accompanied M. Rakowsky with heavenly melodies from the harps over which their fingers were perpetually poised.

Meanwhile M. Tchitcherine, by persuading the Germans into the Pact of Rapallo, had all but overreached his policy of separate treaties. The blow at unity nearly broke up the Conference, which was the last thing he wanted at this early stage.

So he remained in unobtrusive meditation at Santa Margharita for three days, while Mr Lloyd George was making frantic and tremendously agile efforts to stay the disintegration. To placate the French, the British Premier indited an admonitory letter to the Germans, expelling them from further participation in the negotiations with Russia. To distract the attention of the lesser nations from consciousness of impending failure, he gave them a new idealistic toy to play with—the embryo of an all-European pact of non-aggression. And when the French and the Germans and the rest of the flock still showed an inclination to break loose, he rounded them up by verbal whip-crackings, delivered at his reception to five hundred journalists. The direct answers he then gave to leading questions were innocuous and uninformative; but each of them trailed into an indirect exhortation to M. Barthou or to Herren Wirth and Rathenau, or to M. Tchitcherine. To the French he said:—

"I have supported you in punishing the Germans for their disloyalty. Be careful from now onwards. This Conference must continue and must be successful. If it is not successful, we shall hold you responsible for the failure."

And to the Germans: "You can accept the temporary humiliation of expulsion from the Russian deliberations, for later on you will be a party to my pact of non-aggression, and in that international fraternisation the hard words which are but a cloak for harmless compromise will be forgotten."

And to the Russians: "Hurry up with your formula for a general treaty with the Soviets. The hour of the Prodigal Son's reinstatement in the family of Europe is about to strike."

So, by threats, by cajolery, and by force of personality, the British Premier held his variegated crew of statesmen together for a few weeks longer. Had a secret census been taken during those few weeks, an emphatic majority of the delegates would have pronounced for the uselessness of further

collective bargaining with Russia; but Mr Lloyd George's reputation on the Continent as a political magician was so great that they were prepared for a miraculous recovery at any moment, and were, besides, afraid to incur the hostility of so powerful a necromancer.

The Russian negotiations, then, continued, albeit the manner of their continuation became more and ever more involved. There were new notes, new proposals or counter-proposals, new memoranda, new recriminations and crises every other day.

Nothing could have favoured M. Tchitcherine's purposes better than this medley of cross-purposes. He wanted time in which to lay the firm foundations of a dozen separate treaties. For a while, by means of alternate advances, withdrawals, and side-steppings, he was able to prevent any definite issues from being advanced. For the rest, he sat on his hill-top at Santa Margharita, took stock of the Genoese discord, and whenever an opportunity occurred he descended to make the confusion worse confounded, or to take one of the parties to the confusion aside for private negotiation. He sat for three hours with M. Skirmund, chief of the Polish Delegation, over a luncheon table at the Righi, a secluded restaurant on a hillside fifteen hundred feet above Genoa, and afterwards the mutually accusative correspondence which had been passing between the Russian and Polish missions ceased, and a commercial pact between Russia and Poland was ready for conclusion. He gave different and persuasive interpretations of "most favoured nation" principles to the Premiers of Czecho-Slovakia, Yugo-Slavia, Rumania, and Hungary; and four more commercial agreements were prepared against the time when the strivings toward a general European treaty should have ended in failure. He talked special concessions with Signor Schanzer, he bided his time for talking special concessions with Mr Lloyd George, he sent indirect word to the French that in their case, if a separate accord were reached, the Soviets would be provisionally content with *de facto* instead of *de jure* recognition.

He even framed a *concordat* with the Vatican, offering to admit Catholic religious orders into Russia, the north being assigned to the Silesian missionaries, the centre to the Jesuits, and the south to the German order known as Missionaries of the Word of God. For the force represented at the Conference's opening session by the Archbishop of Genoa's scarlet cloak had made itself felt in every stage of the Conference. The Archbishop had visited Mr Lloyd George, had clinked glasses with M. Tchitcherine, both on board the King of Italy's yacht and at Genoa's Municipal Reception to the delegations. The

Pope had sent a letter on the need of peace with Russia. Don Sturzo, the Sicilian monk who manipulated the strings of Italian politics so dexterously that he has made the Catholic Populists the most powerful party in the country, had paid a fleeting visit to Genoa, talked at length with Mr Lloyd George, M. Tchitcherine, and the Archbishop, and left for Rome as suddenly as he came. Signor Gioletti's newspaper was writing of a probable fusion of the Russian Orthodox Church—an inevitable opponent of the Soviets, since the Bolshevist Directorate wanted to confiscate its property—with the Catholic Church.

Meanwhile another important force that had no official representation — the American "Big Business," which watched the opening session through gold-rimmed spectacles — was preparing a *coup*. On one of the most critical evenings in the Conference's history the wearers of these spectacles poured oil on the very troubled waters—billions of pounds' worth of oil, that made the waters still more troubled.

. . . . . .

For three weeks and a day vast quantities of oil had remained quiescent beneath the crust of the Conference, although from time to time a few gallons had oozed through to the surface. One such occasion was when, on 14th April, Colonel Boyle—of Klondike, the Royal Palace at Bucarest, the Royal Dutch Shell Combine, and a hundred and one adventures—arrived in Genoa from Tiflis, and, with an English secretary and a Canadian secretary, settled down in an unobtrusive hotel. Another was when Colonel Boyle closeted himself, first with Sir Philip Lloyd-Graeme (the British Government is a large shareholder in the Royal Dutch Shell Combine), and then with Comrade Krassin. Another was when one of the Americans, with gold-rimmed spectacles, also talked earnestly with Comrade Krassin, and then sent to New York a cablegram that had as telegraphic address the word "Socony" (which is short for "Standard Oil Company of New Jersey).

Following these interviews, the watchfulness of the men with gold-rimmed spectacles changed to watchful waiting for an opportunity exactly suitable to the *coup* they were planning.

That opportunity came within sight when the Powers, weary of M. Tchitcherine's everlasting procrastination, set about framing a full, conclusive, and final ultimatum, which would set before the Russians certain cardinal principles with the demand, "take them or leave them." Nearly a week was spent in putting together the 3500 words of which the document was composed. Everybody's particular views, as well as the Cannes resolutions, had to be taken into account. Mr Lloyd George, in collaboration with Dr Benes

—Premier of Czecho-Slovakia, notable statesman, and friend of every delegation chief in Genoa,—set about collecting these views, and discovering to what extent they might be acceptable to M. Tchitcherine. One day Dr Benes would lunch with M. Barthou, pay an afternoon call on M. Jaspar, and see Signor Schanzer at the Royal Palace. Then, well primed with suggestions and insistences, he would dine with Mr Lloyd George. Next day the friend-of-all-the-world, over lunch with M. Tchitcherine, would attempt to plumb, down to rock-bottom depths, Russian readiness to compromise, leaving over until the coffee stage maybe the subject of Russia's separate treaty with Czecho-Slovakia.

By this means Mr Lloyd George learned that no entire ultimatum to which France and Belgium would subscribe could be accepted by Russia. So the title of the document was modified from ultimatum to "memorandum," in order that further discussions might not be ruled out after its presentation. Clause by clause the jurists drew up the memorandum from the two drafts submitted by British and French; clause by clause the political sub-commission examined, amended, and endorsed it.

Then when the document that was to make or break the Conference was ready (a protest from Belgium against the clause that gave the Soviets the option of compensating for, instead of fully restoring, foreign nationals' property, being the only point on which there was not apparent harmony), the men with the gold-rimmed spectacles sank their shaft, and almost drowned the Conference in oil.

On the day before the memorandum should have been signed an American Senator, who knew all about Standard Oil, showed an American correspondent the "copy" of a supposedly signed agreement, whereby the Royal Dutch Shell Combine was to have a monopoly of the foreign sales for at least five years of all the oil produced in Russia. The correspondent sent cablegram after cablegram to New York, and then gave the great news to his friends among the British. Meanwhile the French, Belgian, and Italian friends of the men with gold-rimmed spectacles had likewise been told of the agreement. "Ha!" said everybody, "now we know why the British arranged the Genoa Conference. It was to obtain a monopoly in the profits from oil areas that are the second greatest, and potentially the greatest, in the world. The British Government is one of the most important shareholders in Royal Dutch, is it not?"

Oil spurted high above all other topics, and, bubbling with suspicions and jealousies, flowed into every hotel that housed a delegation. The telegraph wires to Paris and Brussels dotted and dashed the great oil concession. The instructions tele-

graphed back to the French and British Delegations in Genoa reeked of oil. Instead of attending the final meeting of the sub-commission that was to bless the Russian memorandum before sending it to Santa Margharita, M. Jaspar went to have his hair cut, shampooed, and oiled. M. Barrère—M. Barthou having left for Paris—declined to sign the memorandum until M. Poincaré should have spoken. The meeting was suspended, and until it was resumed every group of delegates spoke of nothing but oil. Finally, the memorandum went to M. Tchitcherine minus two signatures, and with a prominent oil-stain across its front page.

Every day for a week every French, Belgian, and Italian newspaper contained an article on oil. The agreement was denied by Colonel Boyle, by the Royal Dutch Shell Combine's directors, and by M. Krassin; but nothing could convince Genoa that Britain's main interest in a Russian treaty was not the obtaining of oil concessions. True, Genoa admitted the agreement might not have been signed, but quite evidently it had been negotiated, and would be signed when the Russian treaty had been concluded. And the men with the gold-rimmed spectacles, having all but drowned in oil Europe's belief in British good faith, booked sleeping berths on the Paris trains. There was nothing left for them to do in Genoa, now that they had ensured that Standard Oil's rivals should not—or, at any rate, not yet—receive what Standard Oil had been unable to obtain for itself.

At the moment of writing, oil is still the most likely topic wherever two or three conferenciers are gathered together. And M. Tchitcherine, who, having concluded his separate treaty with Germany, having prepared the ground for the conclusion of at least six post-Genoa treaties with other countries, having set the Allied nations at loggerheads, having all but broken up both the Anglo-French Entente and the Little Entente, is about to answer the Powers' memorandum with mock conciliatory proposals that seem destined to bring conclusive, if only partial, failure to the Conference, may well be congratulated on having obeyed to the last full-stop the above-quoted "confidential instructions from the All-Russian Soviet Executive to the Russian delegates" that conclude with the words:—

". . . These suggestions are to be made use of very lavishly in all private negotiations, in order to sow discord among the various nations represented, and particularly in order to create animosity and rivalry in connection with the distribution of concessions for the exploitation of oil-fields, coal-mines, and forests."

INDEX TO VOL. CCXI.

A. F. O.'s, The, 363.
Arabia, A Journey in, 166.
Balfour, Sir Arthur, to the rescue of Mr Lloyd George, 539.
"Bartimeus": The A. F. O.'s, 363.
Bébé, 599.
'Beggar's Opera' in the Eighteenth Century, The, 790.
Bimbashi, 517.
Birkenhead, Lord, destructive policy of, 265.
Blackmail, 1.
Bland, J. O. P.: A Caddie of the Campagna, 798.
Blood Drop Stone, The, 576.
Bluenose Skippers, The, 439.
Bogle, 370.
Bott, Alan: To a Genoese Tune, 818.
"Bow and Adore," 194.
Breton, Lieut.-Colonel E. P. le: An Unknown Frontier, 427.
Butler, Lieut.-Colonel P. R.: Through all the Land Debatable, 22.
Byron, Lord, Correspondence of, 550.
Cadwalldr Jones, The Case of, 774.
Camel, The People of the, 667.
Camel Thieves, the, 674.
Campagna, A Caddie of the, 798.
Candler, Edmund:—
"Bow and Adore," 194.
Bogle, 370.
Carr, Mrs Comyns: 'The Beggar's Opera' in the Eighteenth Century, 790.
Castle Jane, 301.
Chamba: A Shooting Trip in, 318.
Chute, Arthur Hunt: The Bluenose Skippers, 439.
Chypre, Le Doux Pays de, 472.
Class hatred, the policy of, 685.
Clementi, Mrs Cecil: On the Rupununi Trail, 525.
Colombina, 137.
Countless Stones, The, 119.
Crossways of the Game Paths, At the, 553.
Curzon, Lord, the letter of, to Mr Montagu, 545.
Daily Round, The, 409. I. The Burning of the Railway Station, *ib.*—II. The Office Cat, 412—III. Kine Slaughter, 414.
Darwin, Bernard: An Eighteenth Century Miser, 592.
Debtor, the, 385.
Decalogue, the irrelevant, 541.
Doux Pays de Chypre, Le, 472.
Easters in Ireland, 568.
Echoes from the Marshes, 1, 381, 517.
Eighteenth Century Miser, An, 592.
Elephant, A Little, 234.
Emerald Isle, A Fishing Trip in the, 34, 250.
English, the study of, 403.
Eye-witness: The Straying of L. Z. 76, 160.
F.: A Leader of Men, 783.
Farewell, 520.
Farrer, F. L.:—
A Shooting Trip in Chamba, 318.
At the Crossways of the Game Paths, 553.
Father of Bunds, the, 668.
"Fidalgo" in the East, The, 608.
Fishing Trip in the Emerald Isle, A, 34, 250.
From the Outposts:—
A Leader of Men, 783.
The Tobacco Jar, 55.
Frontier, An Unknown, 427.
Fulanain:—
Echoes from the Marshes—being further Tales of the Ma'adan, 1, 381, 517.
The People of the Camel, 667.
Game Paths, At the Crossways of the, 553.
Genoa, the circus at, 814.
Genoese Tune, To a, 818.
Graham, Alan: Murder Disqualifies, 273, 480, 619, 724.
Granville-Barker, Mr, 'The Exemplary Theatre' of, 686—a national theatre undesirable, 688.
Hanging Garden Gully, In, 241.
Hannay, David: The "Fidalgo" in the East, 608.
Hassain Chaoush, 7.
Heather Mixture, 70, 206.
Henry: the Record of a Faithful Slave, 652.
Howell, Evelyn: Henry — the Record of a Faithful Slave, 652.

HUNGARY AND THE HUNGARIANS, 710.
HUTCHINSON, A. S. M.: THE SWORDSMAN, 335.
IMPRESSIONS, VAGABOND, 16, 505.
Ireland, the Treaty between England and, 124.
Irish "Treaty," the, 260—effect of, on Great Britain, 261—Lords Finlay and Carson on, 263—imperilling the, 398.
IRRECONCILABLES, THE, 357.
Kine Slaughter, 414.
KLAXON: HEATHER MIXTURE, 70, 206.
Labour, the Giant with the Feet of Clay, 268.
LAND DEBATABLE, THROUGH ALL THE, 22.
LEADER OF MEN, A, 783.
Letter Book, a, 548.
Letters Read Again, 505.
LIVEING, EDWARD: STORM IN THE DESERT, 446.
Lloyd George, Mr, is he indispensable? 401—fallen reputation of, 538—Sir Arthur Balfour's defence of, 539 *et seq.*
London Docks, 354.
LONG, A. W.: A FISHING TRIP IN THE EMERALD ISLE, 34, 250.
LUCAS, ST JOHN:—
COLOMBINA, 137.
VAGABOND IMPRESSIONS, 16, 505.
LUKE, H. C.: LE DOUX PAYS DE CHYPRE, 472.
L. Z. 76, THE STRAFING OF, 160.
MACMUNN, Major-General Sir GEORGE: THE COUNTLESS STONES, 119.
MACNAUGHTON, W. D.: HUNGARY AND THE HUNGARIANS, 710.
MARSHES, ECHOES FROM THE, 1, 381, 517.
MISER, AN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, 592.
Montagu, Mr, the contented, 402—dismissal of, 543—picture of a harmonious Cabinet, *ib.*
MONTAGUE, C. E.:—
IN HANGING GARDEN GULLY, 241.
MY FRIEND THE SWAN, 416.
Mother of Gold, the, 381.
MURDER DISQUALIFIES, 237, 480, 619, 724.
Music and Memories, 16.
MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD: *January*, 124—*February*, 260—*March*, 397—*April*, 538—*May*, 681—*June*, 806.
My Ship, 355.
Oath, the, 390.
OBJECTS, THE TYRANNY OF, 761.
Office Cat, the, 412.
OFFICER'S WIFE, THE PEREGRINATIONS OF AN, 178, 303.
"OLD YARN—LEARNED AT SEA, AN," 62.
OLD FOR-EVER, 693.
OLLIVANT, ALFRED: OLD FOR-EVER, 693.
ORTON, MAY: BÉBÉ, 599.
OUTPOSTS, FROM THE, 55, 783.
P. C.: THE TOBACCO JAR, 55.
PEOPLE OF THE CAMEL, THE, 667.
PEREGRINATIONS OF AN OFFICER'S WIFE, THE, 178, 303.
Proletarian School, the, 407.
PUICH, MARTIN: THE RED DUSTER, 353. I. Tugs, *ib.*—II. London Docks, 354—III. My Ship, 355.
R.: THE IRRECONCILABLES, 357.
Railway Station, the Burning of the, 409.
RED DUSTER, THE, 353.
ROB ROY OF THE DESERT, A, 643.
ROUND, THE DAILY, 409.
RUPUNUNI TRAIL, ON THE, 525.
Salisbury, Lord, the Life of, 133—Disraeli and, 135.
SAMAWAH, THE STORY OF THE SIEGE OF, 100.
SHOOTING TRIP IN CHAMBA, A, 318.
SKIPPERS, THE BLUENOSE, 439.
SMYTH, H. WARINGTON: A LITTLE ELEPHANT, 234.
Socialism, Professor Eucken on, 270.
SORTES VIRGILIANÆ, 297.
STRAHAN, J. A.: EASTERS IN IRELAND, 568.
STORM IN THE DESERT, 446.
STRAFING OF L. Z. 76, THE, 160.
SWAN, MY FRIEND THE, 416.
SWORDSMAN, THE, 335.
THROUGH ALL THE LAND DEBATABLE, 22.
TOBACCO JAR, THE, 55.
Treaty between England and Ireland, the, 124—ratification of the "Treaty," 260.
Trimming the Balance, 11.
Tugs, 353.
TYRANNY OF OBJECTS, THE, 761.
Ulster, the fate of, 127.
UNKNOWN FRONTIER, AN, 427.
VAGABOND IMPRESSIONS, 16, 505.
VAHEY, JOHN HASLETTE: THE CASE OF CADWALLDR JONES, 774.
VALE, EDMUND: THE BLOOD DROP STONE, 576.
Valera's bombshell, 129.
VICKERY, Lieut.-Colonel C. E.:—
A JOURNEY IN ARABIA, 166.
A ROB ROY OF THE DESERT, 643.
Victorian Age, the, 806.
VIRGILIANÆ, SORTES, 297.
WHALE-HUNT, A, 91.
X.: A WHALE-HUNT, 91.
YOUNG, DESMOND: "AN OLD YARN—LEARNED AT SEA," 62.

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CONTENTS.

OLD FOR-EVER. BY ALFRED OLLIVANT, . . . 693

HUNGARY AND THE HUNGARIANS.
BY W. D. MACNAUGHTON, ... 710

MURDER DISQUALIFIES.
BY ALAN GRAHAM. CHAPS. XIII.-XVIII., . . 724

THE TYRANNY OF OBJECTS, ... 761

THE CASE OF CADWALLDR JONES.
BY JOHN HASLETTE VAHEY, ... 774

FROM THE OUTPOSTS. A LEADER OF MEN. BY F., . 783

'THE BEGGAR'S OPERA' IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.
BY MRS COMYNS CARR, ... 790

A CADDIE OF THE CAMPAGNA. BY J. O. P. BLAND, . 798

MUSINGS WITHOUT METHOD, ... 806
THE VICTORIAN AGE—A PARADOX—PHILISTINES AND MEN OF GENIUS—GOING TO THE FIGHT—THE OLD STYLE AND THE NEW—THE CIRCUS AT GENOA—FOREIGN POLICY ON THE HUSTINGS—WHAT MR LLOYD GEORGE BROUGHT BACK.

TO A GENOESE TUNE. BY ALAN BOTT, . . . 818

INDEX, ... 831

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